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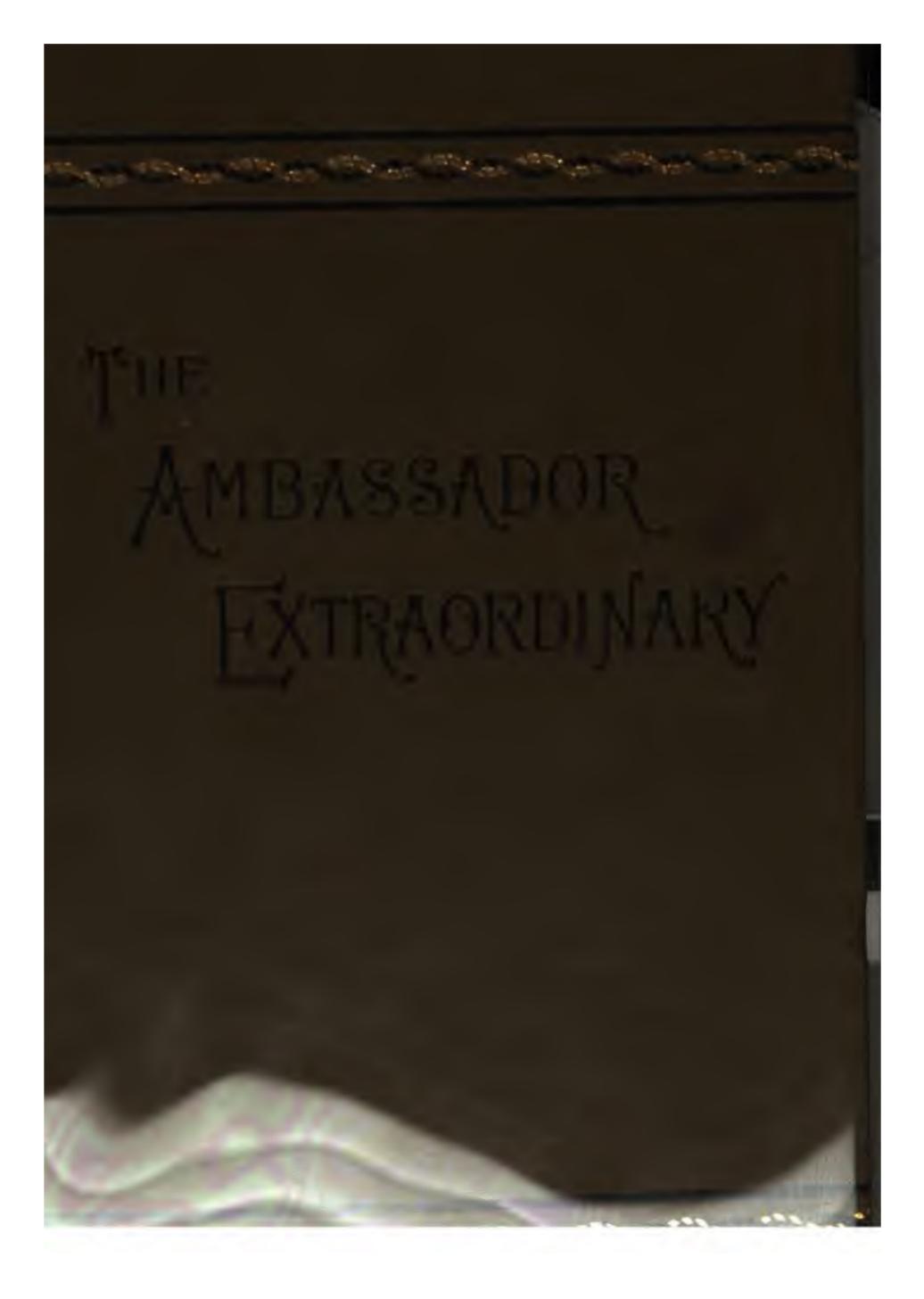
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THE  
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HIS EXCELLENCY  
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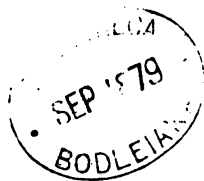
' He that hath light within his own clear breast  
May sit i'the centre and enjoy bright day ;  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts—  
Himself is his own dungeon.'

' Though the mills of God grind slowly  
Yet they grind exceeding small.'

' Short is the lesson, though the lecture long :—  
Be good ;—and let Heaven answer for the rest.'

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE  
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY.

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CHAPTER I.

LOVERS AND LOVE.

WHEN Julian Saint-Paul and Madonna Gay find themselves so unexpectedly alone together in the Viscount's carriage, neither of them, for a little time, can say a word to the other.

The influence of the Countess Titania upon the feelings of the young physician, although not in any way watched by his betrothed, has certainly not been unobserved by her ; but as for himself, he is like a man both intoxicated and drugged ; his nerves are strung to the utmost condition of excitement ; his brain whirls.

Upon the less impulsive and therefore less impressionable nature of Madonna the blandishments of the Count Oberon have produced no such effect. That she was charmed by his conversation cannot be denied — almost infinitely charmed; but, with affections so fully preoccupied, and sympathies so inexperienced in the practice of promiscuous regard, the admiration which she could not help feeling for the fascinating companion of the evening seems to have overflowed from her heart, leaving it filled only with the old desires, although now rendered in some vague way almost painful and distressing. She is disturbed and alarmed. It would be idle to say that as a woman she knows not why; but what consciousness of the cause she permits herself to entertain becomes associated rather with a wish to forget than with any desire to dwell upon it.

‘I am ill,’ says Julian; ‘my head swims; I wish I could sleep.’

‘Then sleep, dear Julian; let me wrap this fur about you.’

‘Thank you—thank you; I shiver with cold.

‘Let me call to my father.’

‘No!’

‘I wish we had not gone there, Julian.’

This remark arouses the young man.

‘You are not affected too?’

‘The very house,’ she replies, ‘seems to strike one to the heart with a dreadful chill.’

‘The company,’ says Julian, as if in a dream, sinking back amongst the fur again, ‘was delightful—the conversation divine.’

Madonna looks at him wistfully. His eyes are closed; his features are pale; his temples seem to throb; he breathes heavily. If the old-world necromancies, she thinks, could be believed in, he might be deemed the victim of some enchantment.

‘Sleep, dear Julian; you will be at home soon.’

He sleeps. He dreams. He starts in his dream: he mutters audibly.

She will not listen. She busies herself with whatever trifle she can, that she may not hear. She coughs and moves gently, that she may disturb his dream without disturbing his sleep.

He sheds tears and sobs.

‘Julian!’ she says in a loud whisper; but it does not awake him.

‘Do not leave me, Madonna,’ he says; but it is in his sleep.

‘Strike fair!’ he suddenly cries out; but it is still in his sleep.

‘Then let me die!’ he cries again, and starts from out of his slumber, casting away the fur.

‘Madonna!’ he says in wonder, ‘where are we? Where have I been? I thought I was in—in—in hell. Where is the serpent that I fought?’

‘Compose yourself, dear Julian; sleep again; let me wrap you up; you will be ill, dear Julian.’

‘I am already ill; I am struck by some deadly thing not of this world. I know not what it is. But Madonna—promise me——’

‘Yes, dear Julian, what shall I promise?’

‘Promise me that if I cease to—to love you, you will not believe it.’

‘But why, dear Julian, why should you suppose such a thing?’

‘I don’t know, Madonna; what did I say?’

‘ Oh, nothing ; now compose yourself, dear Julian, and we shall soon be home.’

‘ Promise me, Madonna, that if I am fascinated—I mean—what do I mean ?—that you will not hate me.’

‘ How could any one hate you, dear Julian ?’

‘ What did I say ? Promise me, Madonna, that you will not love—that is—Where are we ?’

‘ I will indeed promise you, dear Julian. Now pray sleep again, and you will be better.’

‘ Promise me, dearest Madonna, promise me never to believe of me——’

‘ I will promise you, dearest Julian, never to believe of you anything that is ungenerous or unkind.’

‘ Then let them do their worst !’ he cries, relapsing into a calmer slumber, which fortunately lasts until the carriages draw up at the door of his lodging, and Mr. Gay, seeing that he is unwell, places him in charge of his landlady, with strict injunctions that he shall be carefully attended to.

The first thing the good landlady does is

to send promptly for a doctor, while she puts her lodger to bed. The doctor tells her that her promptitude will be found in the morning, he hopes, to have made all the difference between a bad night and a brain fever ; and accordingly, next day Julian Saint-Paul is much better.

Madonna sleeps but little. Her mind is still disturbed and alarmed with vague misgivings of mysterious danger.

‘ I wish we had not gone to that dreadful house,’ she says ; ‘ I am afraid it will be to us the gate of a new bad world. And yet the Viscount was kind, and the party a most pleasant one.’

## CHAPTER II.

## A DREAM OF LOVE.

AT the time when Master Georgius the Architect is in dire imagination twirling wonderful dishes in the dismal company of the men of mark and metal in the Sanctuary of the Viscount Malign, his Excellency himself is walking up and down the polished marble floor of that mysterious chamber absorbed in deep reflection. The Ambassador Extraordinary has many other affairs upon his mind than those which this narrative may touch upon ; and this night he may, for what we know, have disposed of a good many since his return from his walk along the country roads. Be this as it may, however, we find him now soliloquising thus :

‘ By this time the physician must be asleep. Titania, too, with all such light-hearted

women, sleeps like a wasp in winter. Let me see them now in their slumber.'

Lais happens to be restless ; she is often so at midnight. Creeping along under the line of mirrors, she and her shadow beyond seem to be watching each other in mutual fear as they pass up and down abreast.

Julian Saint-Paul has been for a couple of hours under the influence of a soporific without which he certainly had not been in a condition of mind for repose. As it is, he tosses uneasily upon his bed, and mutters almost incessantly.

'Where am I ?' he exclaims in agitation. 'What has befallen me ? What poison have I eaten ? What viper has stung me ? My blood tingles as if it were tainted with some unmanly essence. My brain is bewildered as if I were drunk with some unholy wine !'

The Ambassador whispers his name. He has not long to wait ; at the instant the figure of the young man is in the Sanctuary.

'What is this that you have done to me ?' he cries with outstretched hands ; 'what venom have you shot into my heart ?'

‘Compose yourself,’ says the Viscount, ‘I beg.’

‘I cannot compose myself, Viscount Malign. My heart is on fire ; what have you done to me?—Oh, pardon me ! Yes, my heart is indeed on fire ; what can you do for me in pity?’

‘I can call a fair lady to console you.’

‘Fair lady ? Is her name Madonna ?’

‘Nay, nay, surely not ; you can yourself at any time——’

‘Then away with your fair lady ! Perhaps it is one of these fair ladies here, so inviting as they are ? Who is this ? And who is this ?’

‘This is Delilah ; this is Herodias ; both charming women——’

Lais pauses to look at the young man.

‘Too charming, Viscount Malign. Oh that I were blinded Samson to pull down the pillars of this deadly house ! Oh that I were John of the Desert, though murdered in the dungeon, to rise up at the judgment-seat against you !—Forgive me, sir, forgive me ! I am no Samson ; no John ; but a wretched youth bewitched by some treacherous device.

Have compassion upon me—have compassion !'

'Who speaks in these days of being bewitched ?' replies the Ambassador ; 'the word is a silly woman's—a trifling girl's. Strong men are not bewitched.'

'Slay me, Viscount Malign !'

'Pshaw ! why talk like this ?'

'Oh, pity me !—No ! give me a sword !'

Another whisper from his Excellency's lips, and there arises the graceful figure of the Countess Titania.

Julian trembles ; hides his face with his hands clasped in agony.

'Ah, my handsome escort !' says the soft voice of the lady, 'how good of you not to forget me !'

Julian drops his hands and gazes upon the fair face enraptured. The Viscount smiles.

'How could man ever forget such a woman ?' says Julian ; 'let me kneel at your feet in worship.'

'Have a care,' says the Countess Titania ; 'where is the young girl with the soft eyes ?'

Lais utters a plaintive whine.

'Oh, tempt me not, I pray, I pray, I pray !'

Peter denied his Master; why not I my love?’

‘Love?’ says the Viscount, as if with a sneer.

‘Ay, love!’ cries Julian, turning quickly on the defensive; ‘not even you, O deadly enemy! shall come between me and my love!’

‘Love,’ says Viscount Malign, coolly if not disdainfully, ‘is a little madness——’

‘A great madness,’ says Julian, ‘grand—sublime!’

‘A very great madness, if you will have it so. But as when the old magicians—You know the story of what the old magicians used to do?’

‘Well?’

‘They turned their wands into pretty snakes—gay glistening creatures in the sun.’

‘Yes?’

‘Love; love; every pretty snake of them may stand for love.’

‘And what then?’

‘Another crafty one, doubtless with a withered smile upon his cheek, threw down another wand; and all the pretty snakes

were gone! The latest love had swallowed all the rest!

‘I have no love but one!’

‘That is well,’ says the Countess sweetly; ‘there ought to be but one.’

‘All else is hatred by comparison.’

‘You do not hate me?’ says the Countess.

‘Why, dear lady, should I hate you?’

Lais is very uneasy. ‘Peace, fretful beauty,’ says the Viscount, and he smiles pleasantly; ‘Words—words—words; hold out your arms to him, pretty Titania.’

Julian quivers from head to foot. ‘Have mercy,’ he whispers, ‘oh have mercy!’

The beautiful Countess has no mercy—it is of course a dream—she holds out her arms.

‘No! no!’ he exclaims, covering his eyes with yet unfaithful fingers.

The Countess still holds out her arms and laughs gaily—it is but a dream, and such things occur in dreams. Lais starts forward, and her eyes flash emerald fire.

The young man is breathing stertorously, like Leviathan vanquished. He flings his hands into the air, and with a long hysteric shriek——

But he stumbles. Such things occur in dreams; he stumbles although there is no obstacle between him and the loveliness. He stumbles and falls headlong down upon the pitiless cold floor. And as he falls, he has vanished!

‘Where is the Countess?’ cries Julian to the landlady as he awakes in agony.

But says the Viscount Malign to the Countess Titania—for she has not vanished—‘This is a fair youth for thee to love, Titania.’

‘Pshaw!’ says the Countess, ‘it is he that loves me; which is a better thing, Viscount.’

‘Much better, sweet Titania, much better; I will dismiss thee, then, fair ally, to more wholesome slumbers.’ The Viscount waves his hand; the figure slowly fades away. The Countess is a heavy sleeper; the dream has not awakened her; she is a little fatigued after the long drive home in the cold.

## CHAPTER III.

## ANOTHER DREAM OF LOVE.

HIS EXCELLENCY is alone again. Lais approaches him timidly, as if to deprecate his anger.

‘I am not angry with thee, fair Lais,’ he says; ‘why should I be angry with thee? Thou hast seen the pretty Countess before. Why shouldst thou think of flying at her beautiful throat—so beautiful as it is? Thou art unreasonable, my beauty; this is the shallow jealousy of the sex, fair one; the Countess is a charming creature. Now I will show thee another of thy frail sort, but not so beautiful as our Titania.’

Madonna Gay stands before him. She has her hands crossed upon her bosom and her aspect is sad. Lais creeps to her feet.

‘Why so discomposed, dear young lady?’ says the Viscount.

‘I dream of Julian,’ she replies; ‘his discomposure is mine; I left him sick and sorrowful.’

‘He will be better to-morrow, fair girl; if you are to marry him you will find him many times thus sick and sorrowful. She who mates with genius finds it wayward at the best.’

Madonna sighs heavily. ‘Ah me!’

‘The woman is the happiest in this strange world,’ continues the Viscount, ‘whose lot it is to marry some of the simplest of men; one who wears a good coat on his back and can pay for it, and a smile on his lips and cannot account for it. Such a man furnishes his wife with a pleasant home in which she is supreme; supplies her children with all she can desire; bestows them well in life; dies peaceably in her arms; and leaves her his house and his carriage and more money than she knows how to spend. There are thousands of such happy women all around you, in the several stages of their painless, and therefore most pleasurable, existence.’

‘I cannot contradict you,’ says Madonna, ‘but you know not how deeply I love him.’

‘Oh yes, I know it well. It will be a fine thing to be the partner of a man of power. Here is a man who is to rise in the world; you are to rise with him. He is to wield a sceptre of some sort presently, and, what is better, he is to win it; you are to be his queen. You do not have the trouble of conquering the kingdom; he does that; you are content to share his throne. They who bow to him must bow to you; they cannot help it; for you and he sit side by side. You love him, therefore, for the coming crown; and, when it comes, you will assume it is your own by right of purchase; have you not earned your share in it by all this love?’

‘You are cruel, sir; indeed you are.’

‘Nay, I am but candid; and, I will add, yours is still a nobler love than most. What shall we say of the woman who loves for lucre? There are a good many of such, Madonna Gay; and a husband who has a fine equipage is quite as likely to turn out well as one who has none.’

‘Perhaps so.’

‘And what of the woman who loves for a title? She walks in to dinner before another woman whose superior worth it would be idle to deny; and still another walks in before herself whose inferiority—perhaps but a child and half-witted—is still more an outrage to all common-sense.’

‘Yes.’

‘I will say nothing of those—perhaps there are not many of them in good society nowadays—who love for the grand eyes, the handsome figure, the ambrosial curls; it is the foolish male animal indeed who alone—and yet perhaps not so often now—is snared by such rags and feathers; but I have said enough to show you that the woman whose love is bound up in intellectual ambition is perhaps only the least selfish of all.’

‘Selfish?’ says Madonna; ‘can my love for Julian be selfish? I would pluck out my heart and cast it away if it had a selfish thought towards Julian.’

‘And then you would be like many more very charming women—without a heart at all. It saves them an infinitude of trouble. Does it not, Lais?’

‘O unkind jester! you must know little of the nature of woman.’

‘My pretty child, I know too much. Do not suppose that I fail in homage to the sex. Oh no! I like the ladies; I have been their most obedient servitor for any time you choose to name. The more I know of them, the more I like them.’

‘As toys, I fear, as toys.’

‘Precisely so, fair Madonna; and precisely what they seek. Do you ever find yourself, in a crowded suite of rooms—when conscious of being sufficiently well dressed, as you are young and sufficiently pretty—gracefully pausing at some favourable point to stop the way, in order that the company, if even in anger, and certainly in nothing better at the best than jealousy, should note who does it?’

‘Never, sir!’ says Madonna with a little virtuous indignation.

‘Never? I am surprised. Try it. Art is to conceal art, and it may be done as gracefully as it may be grossly. But don’t stand upon scruples; it is the character of genius to be bold. Try it.’

‘No doubt there may be women——’

‘Well?’

‘I will not say what was on my tongue.— But, sir, there are others, in whom all the fine affections of the future wife and mother, and the present devotion of the daughter, seem to combine their strength in forming a character of perfect love, wholly unselfish and ineffably pure, which is trustfully laid upon the heart of a man who——’

‘Who, if he deserves it, sweet maiden, is more than man.’

‘No, sir, no! who, if cast by blessed Nature in the same mould, will mingle with her love his own, like generous wine with sweet water, so that the particles can never be separated again, because the essences are for evermore joined in mutual influence.’

‘These are not men and women of the world, I fear,’ says the Viscount; and he whispers another name. Lais sees something approaching, and snarls in anger. There appears to ascend, out of the vapourous depth beneath, the exquisite figure of Count Oberon.

Lais lashes her tail. ‘Peace, beauty,’ says her master.

‘Ah, your Excellency!’ cries the charming Count, with a smile that displays his beautiful teeth. The puma displays hers as well; but the Count displays his without disturbing the symmetry of his lips. ‘Delighted again! A more perfect dinner-party I never attended in all my life, I swear. And my partner, let me tell you—a most charming girl; so simple and unaffected; so graceful and instinctively accomplished; so perfect and so pure a woman, my dear Viscount, upon my honour! I feel I cannot be denied. Her lover and I must shoot each other if he cannot be persuaded to give place.’ And the Count laughs at this merry conceit—it is only a dream.

The laugh of Count Oberon is always contagious. The Viscount Malign smiles if he does not laugh, but Madonna cannot help it and laughs—in her dream—aloud. Lais piteously whines.

The gay Count turns and beholds the lady by his side.

‘My charming——’ he begins in his surprise, but with a low bow recovers himself. ‘You will forgive me, I am sure, for an indiscreet word which was at last sincere.’

‘The lady can never forgive you, Count,’ says Viscount Malign, ‘for proposing to shoot her lover.’

‘Did I ? Then let me recall the word ; this lover shall shoot me. It will be but the greater honour ;’ and the Count laughs again in his beautiful way, till it seems as if even the sentinels of mark and metal in the outer chamber beyond the mirrors might scarcely be found to keep their countenance much longer against the contagious influence of the Count Oberon’s laugh.

‘Nay,’ says Madonna gaily (such things occur in dreams), ‘let us speak a little more soberly. Julian, I dare say, will be glad to know that you favour his poor choice.’

‘An admirable youth,’ says the Count ; ‘my sister is delighted with him ; and she is a good judge of admirable youths ;’ and he laughs again, and the Viscount smiles in unison.

But Madonna somehow ceases to feel merry, and so keeps silence. Lais is uneasy, and breathes hard.

‘Fair Lais,’ says the Viscount Malign, ‘thou art in pain ; the Count’s merry talk

disturbs thee, beauty. Lais, my dear Count, is a fine lady in her way ; she is all too easily offended with boisterous men.'

The wild beast rises to her feet with a cry.

Madonna puts her soft hand on the creature's sleek forehead. Lais licks her hand.

Count Oberon essays to put his hand also, not less soft, upon the animal's head. She retreats from him with a snarling lip and her eyes glowing.

'The Count has seen such play before, sweet Lais,' says his Excellency.

The Count laughs gaily. Madonna fails to understand the jest. Lais hangs her head and retires to the shelter of one of the alcoves. It is her instinct, as she passes either of the priestly figures which uphold the fountain basins, to sniff the scent of the sacrificial spray about his feet and in the air around ; but as she passes now, the sacrifice is unnoticed, and she hastens to hide herself, uttering only a low moan.

'Beautiful creature !' says Madonna.

The Count smiles very graciously.

'Yes,' says the Ambassador ; 'a beautiful creature—like many more.'

‘Our still more beautiful creature here,’ says Count Oberon, with a gesture of apology, ‘will forgive me——’

‘Indeed she will not, my dear Count,’ says Viscount Malign, ‘for so unpolished a compliment.’

But the fascinations of the Count Oberon are not to be set aside so easily. His low laughter and a faint blush which overspreads his forehead, are accompanied by so bright a glance of his beautiful eyes that he is more than forgiven.

But if Madonna smiles for one instant, her smile becomes all the more suddenly arrested the next, and the colour that suffuses her face, and the sigh that heaves her bosom, give to her glance a character of reproach as she fixes her eyes intently upon the fair ladies in corroded silver that uphold the world.

‘What is this?’ she whispers. ‘What mysterious dream is this? Who are these? Julian, who are these?’ and she trembles, and her figure seems to lose its balance, as if she might possibly fall.

The Count Oberon—such things occur in dreams—puts forth his arm to save her, and

she is saved. Such things occur in dreams—he supports her by the waist. Such things still occur in dreams—he takes her hand and raises it to his lips.

Whether human influence only, or more than human, let us not inquire; Madonna's hand thrills as if with some ungracious joy—say not unlawful pleasure—under the touch of Count Oberon's lips. Such things still occur in dreams—he advances the other hand.

Madonna has vanished!

As the young girl awakes in the darkness and the stillness of the night, she trembles as if a thief were in her chamber—perhaps an assassin—if any hand of man, or of devil, could possibly be raised against one so tender. But she holds her breath; listens intently, lest even the sound of respiration might reveal her presence to the unknown enemy. The clock strikes, slowly and relentlessly, on the stair; the echo of the last stroke seems to linger for ever. She covers her head with the bedclothes and prays to be forgiven—forgiven for dreaming a forbidden dream. And as she prays she sleeps again.

The Count Oberon has awaked also. The

Count, being a person of light spirits and perhaps light head, is not unaccustomed to dreams; he knows they are quite unsubstantial, and is often amused by the recollection of them. But this dream has aroused him somewhat suddenly; and, although he is much more calm and self-possessed than most might be, he sits up in bed and passes his slender fingers through his luxuriant hair. The clock strikes in a neighbouring church-tower.

‘I should have thought it later,’ says Count Oberon, and goes to sleep again.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FACE OF A FRIEND.

IN the morning Julian Saint-Paul receives a very early visit from the doctor, who has upon reflection become somewhat uneasy about the symptoms of the previous night. Fortunately the young man is better than he has expected, but he cautions him to avoid work for the day if he can.

By eleven o'clock Sir Constantine Gay has dropped in to leave some casual message for his friend, and, finding him at home, has remained.

With all respect for woman, let us remark that the best friend for man, when he really wants a friend, is man. Sir Constantine Gay is to Julian such a friend. The disparity of aim between the two young men, combined with what is none the less on that account a

uniformity of character, seems to render them especially fitted for still preserving the close friendship of their more youthful days, by reason of a continual interest in each other's affairs. To Sir Constantine the quixotic enthusiasm of the young philanthropist affords a delightful and never-failing stimulus to the exercise of generous feeling; to Julian the calmer wisdom of the man of the world—the gentleman of the world—supplies equally a constant lesson in discretion as the better part of even moral valour.

That Julian is 'hipped' somehow, his friend perceives very clearly.

'You don't look yourself this morning,' says Sir Constantine; 'the Viscount's wine doesn't suit you.'

'No, my dear friend; I took very little wine.' He speaks in an absent manner. 'I am afraid I cannot attribute it to that.'

His friend, as a man of the world, eyes him inquiringly. ('What can be the matter?' he says to himself.)

Julian sighs wearily; yawns in spite of

repression ; puts his hand over his eyes ; leans his forehead on his hand ; gazes vacantly at the table.

‘ And whom did you meet ? ’ inquires Sir Constantine. ( ‘ Something the matter evidently. ’ )

‘ It was quite a small party. ’

‘ Anybody I know ? ’

‘ The Professor and George Oldhosen— and—— ’

Julian hesitates. ( ‘ What can this be ? ’ thinks Sir Constantine. )

‘ And Madonna—— ’ continues Julian.

( ‘ Something amiss there, ’ says Sir Constantine to himself, ‘ something wrong with Madonna. ’ )

‘ I don’t know what’s the matter with me, ’ Constantine. ( ‘ Madonna’s the matter, no doubt. Woman-like, she has been flirting, I’ll be bound ; who’s the man ? ’ )

‘ And Mariana Oldhosen. ’ ( ‘ Yes. And some one else presently. ’ )

‘ And a friend of the Viscount’s. ’

‘ Ah ! ’

‘ Count Oberon, he called him—— ’ ( ‘ That’s the man. ’ )

‘No other gentlemen at all?’ says Sir Constantine.

‘No more.’ (‘Poor Madonna!’)

‘I know the man; his name is—at least they call him Ob. He has a sister, and they call her—I’m sure I beg the lady’s pardon—Tit. Very showy people. (Madonna in bad hands.)’

‘The same, no doubt. What a headache I have!’

‘Lie down, my dear fellow; you’re not at all well, I can see that.’

‘No, I can’t lie down. I wonder if this is fever coming on?’ Julian feels his own pulse. ‘A hundred, I should think.’

‘My dear boy, don’t,’ says Sir Constantine; ‘we shall both have the horrors if you do that. Talk it off. Ob made himself very agreeable, I suppose?’

‘Oh yes, very much so, indeed.’

‘Took my cousin in to dinner, I suppose?’

‘Yes.’ (‘In very bad hands.’)

‘Poor girl! she would scarcely be easy with so fine a gentleman. A very handsome man, though, very.’

‘Oh yes.’ (‘I’ll see Madonna about this.’)

Poor fellow, it won't do ; she must be talked to.')

A tap at the door. Enter Sergeant Jolly-buff. It is a standing rule that the Sergeant knows his way upstairs. Seeing Sir Constantine in the room, the old soldier begs pardon and would withdraw.

'Come in, Sergeant,' says Sir Constantine ; 'you are the very man we want.'

'Thanky, sir,' says the Sergeant with a merry laugh, closing the door and drawing himself up upon parade, with heels together—or heel and stump—and shoulders back ; 'then here I am at your honour's orders and the doctor's—ha, ha, ha !'

'I'm very glad you thought of calling, Sergeant,' says Julian ; 'I am not able to get out to-day.'

'Sorry for that, doctor, very sorry ; what's the matter ?'

'I went out to dinner last night, and feel rather poorly this morning.'

'Bad wine, Sergeant,' says Sir Constantine ; 'scold him. (Must rally him a little ; try that.)'

└ 'I'm sure the doctor don't want scolding

about that, Sir Constantine ; I won't believe it—ha, ha, ha !

‘ I took a little out of compliment to the company, Sergeant, as you know I do.’

‘ Yes, I allow you a little, that's quite right, doctor.’

Sir Constantine laughs. It is a standing joke with the Sergeant that he allows the doctor a little wine on account of Timothy, and that the doctor allows him on account of age a trifle of rum and water ; both parties reserving to themselves nevertheless a perfect right to forbid the use of beer which neither can digest, and to denounce the existence of gin-palaces which both regard as mere temples of temptation and legalised entrances to Tophet. Sir Constantine therefore has his laugh, and the Sergeant honestly laughs with him.

‘ I know what you're up to,’ says the Sergeant ; ‘ but we're right for all that, is the doctor and me ; it isn't pulling of a long face that will do it, nor yet starving of the blood. But what's the matter with you, doctor ? Not meeting of you at Marrabone's I came on at once, you see.’

‘You knew,’ says Julian, ‘I should not have missed your appointment for any slight cause.’

‘No, doctor,’ says the Sergeant, ‘I know you wouldn’t.’

‘Does the sun shine upon the Gardens yet, Sergeant?’ says Sir Constantine.

‘Not yet, it don’t.’

## CHAPTER V.

## MARRABONE'S.

'MARRABONE'S' is the name applied to a certain area of house-property which forms part of Sweetbriar Gardens. It occupies one corner at the end of the principal thoroughfare, next the Sun in Heaven, taking perhaps a hundred feet of the frontage of the street, and running down the cross street, called White Sparrow Street, to a depth of about twice as much. It is thickly covered with houses of the same character as the rest; but what makes Marrabone's remarkable is that almost from time immemorial the whole of these houses have been allowed to remain unoccupied and to go to wreck. And what is stranger still, there has been for the principal part of the period an exception to this state of things which is scarcely an exception after

all. An old man, a solitary old man, known as 'old Mr. Marrabone,'—the proprietor, in fact, of the estate,—has occupied a single room, no one knows where, amongst the ruins.

Something seems now to have happened; it can scarcely, one would think, be directly connected with Marrabone's itself, but the Sergeant has in his own odd way left a message last night asking Julian to meet him in the morning, at the usual hour of ten, 'at Marrabone's.'

Let us look more closely at Marrabone's. Down the midst of the ground there runs a narrow alley called Marrabone's Rents, having for an entrance a low and narrow archway opening from the main thoroughfare of Sweetbriar Gardens, and having no outlet at all at the farther end. There are thus four lines of houses on the property: one in Sweetbriar Gardens; one in White Sparrow Street; and two in Marrabone's Rents, facing each other at a distance of five or six feet. There are no fewer than about forty houses in all, once the best in the neighbourhood, each of four storeys, including cellars. More than a thou-

sand souls, therefore, might be comfortably and respectably housed, after the manner of the locality, on this ground of Marrabone's; and it has always been a marvel in the Gardens how any one could have the heart to let so much property lie idle when respectable lodgings were so much in request.

Old Mr. Marrabone came to dwell in this desolate abode about twenty years ago. He seemed at that time to be already an old man. He was tall and very thin, and stooped a little. He looked, in the opinion of Sweetbriar Gardens, quite the gentleman. They put him down for a miser.

For ten or twelve years before that time the whole area of Marrabone's had been left as described—untenanted. During the first month every pane of glass in the windows towards the street had necessarily been broken, and the shutters, such as they were, burst in. It had therefore been determined to board up the windows from top to bottom once for all. The archway into the Rents had been similarly boarded up before. So the property, as the carpenters could not help saying, 'looked much more snug now, as well

as not so disrespectful, and might last it out.'

What the property was to last out was a friendly suit in the High Court of Chancery, by name 'Marrabone *versus* Jones,' to which there was united in the bonds of a kind of legal holy matrimony another friendly suit in the High Court of Chancery, by name 'Jones *versus* Marrabone;' both of these interesting manifestations of a friendly spirit having had their origin in the union in the bonds of ecclesiastical holy matrimony of two young people long ago, the grandfather of Marrabone's mother, and the grandmother of Jones's father, little thinking, as generally happens in such cases, what was to come of it. What made the matter all the more odd as regarded Marrabone's at Sweetbriar Gardens was the circumstance that one of the friendly suits concerned itself only about a tin mine two hundred miles away to the south, while the other had for its sole object the administration of a coal mine two hundred miles away to the north.

At any rate, the time came at length when both of these suits were settled by one pro-

digious effort of the seventh Lord High Chancellor who had happened to have to deal with them; and then it was that old Mr. Marrabone settled himself at Sweetbriar Gardens.

The way he settled himself was this. He came with a carpenter one day and had one of the street doors in White Sparrow Street broken open. The keys of the property—five hundred and ninety-nine in all, including cupboards—had been handed over to him by the officials of the High Court of Chancery in a deal box, which itself had to be broken open to get at the keys; but it was so much more easy after all to break open the door of the house than to find its key amongst the five hundred and ninety-nine, that this is what was done. Old Mr. Marrabone then proceeded straight through the house to the back door, and had that broken open for the same reason. He found himself in a back yard six feet square, littered with the wreck of several chimney-pots and what had once been the water-butt. From this yard he passed over the rotten remains of a paling fence into another yard exactly like it; and

from that into the house opposite by again breaking in at the back door. Holding on his course still in a straight line, he reached the front door of this second mansion; which also he broke open; then he found himself in the open passageway of 'the Rents.' At one end this cheerless lane was, as we know, barricaded with boarding. At the other end there was a high wall, as high as the houses. He looked about him. His attention was attracted by the number 15 painted on one of the doors. When he was a little boy at school he had been Number 15. He broke open that door therefore, and made the house his dwelling.

Since that day old Mr. Marrabone has dwelt in the parlour of No. 15 in the Rents; and his communication with the outer world has been by the way he had broken through from White Sparrow Street. He had a new latch put on the door in White Sparrow Street, and that was all. The open yards and the lane were never cleared of an atom of the wreck that littered them. The one window of the one inhabited room was glazed, and the sashes nailed to the frame. The

chimney was swept, and a fire lighted in the grate. The walls and ceiling were white-washed. But not even the floor was cleaned, nor were the splashes of white-wash wiped off the window-panes. A few articles of old furniture were brought into the room, a bed and bedding included ; and a couple of sacks of coals were shot beside the White Sparrow Street door. Other sacks of coals from time to time have been shot in the same place ; but every other provision the old gentleman has brought in with his own hands. And thus has he been pleased to live amongst universal wreck, entirely unvisited—unless, as the people would suggest, it might be by immaterial things.

Opposite the whole length of Marrabone's in White Sparrow Street there is a long dead wall, the enclosure of a tallow-factory entered from another thoroughfare ; and as White Sparrow Street itself terminates in a dead wall exactly at the termination of its Marrabone frontage, it is plain that old Mr. Marrabone has had no immediate neighbours, and, but for children at play, no one to observe his going out or his coming in. The

children he has been accustomed to conciliate by habitual gifts of pence, and not even the rudest young ruffian amongst them all would molest him with a word.

One thing there was, however, that was quite peculiar amongst old Mr. Marrabone's plenishing. A cart-load of wooden pipes of all sizes was brought in; these constituted a chamber organ. The old gentleman put it together with his own hands; it half filled his solitary room. And when the street sounds have been quiet, people in Sweetbriar Gardens have constantly heard from their open windows the tones of grand church music sobbing through the air.

And now this is what has happened. The other morning he beckoned to a little girl from the door in White Sparrow Street, and gave her a packet to take to the post. It was addressed to his agent, a lawyer of some standing in a very different part of the town. It contained an appointment to attend him at White Sparrow Street—for the first time there—next day at noon; and the key of the latch was enclosed in the packet. The solicitor attended the appointment. He

opened the door. He passed inwards along the obvious route. He reached the inhabited room. Old Mr. Marrabone sat at his organ ; *dead.*

What is the secret of this old man's life ? There has gathered in White Sparrow Street a dirty crowd to speculate upon this question. He was fond of children. There are little ones standing by, wistfully looking up into the dirty faces of their elders, down whose cheeks there runs such a thing as a clean streak as they hear of old Mr. Marrabone having died ; sitting at his organ ; in the midst of universal wreck and ruin. He must have been once a little one like themselves ; in happy days that he alone could have remembered ; kindly tended no doubt by a mother—a gentle mother, for he was a gentle gentleman. He had been then a handsome youth ; for he was a handsome old man, very tall, and slim, and of a kindly countenance. He had loved a lady no doubt, as such a youth must do all the world over ; and he had loved her tenderly, for he had tender eyes. And perhaps she had withdrawn from him her beautiful smile ; as such ladies, alas ! will do,

thinking not of the mischief. Or rather, as cruel destiny too often doth decree, it may have been death that withdrew her smile, not herself; it must have been so, they think, for his own sad smile was very soft and sweet. So he had come to Sweetbriar Gardens, because it was a place so shut away from the brighter world in which he had lost so much; and, with his organ for sole company—unless the angels might have come to visit him, for he was kind to little children—he had thus passed his dread old age amidst the wreck and ruin, and had found at last his melancholy relief in that which comes at last to all. Thus, in their own rough speech, the women of Sweetbriar Gardens, gathered round his door, spoke kindly of their mysterious neighbour.

## CHAPTER VI.

### OLD MR. MARRABONE'S BEQUEST.

THE community of Sweetbriar Gardens has always been a divided community. There is a strong Catholic party, and there is an equally strong Protestant party. Fortunately for the general peace, the Sun in Heaven and the Pilgrim's Rest are of no party, looking only to the general good through the medium of the indiscriminating refreshment of both parties alike. The people, therefore, being in this respect left without guidance from their natural and licensed leaders the vic-tuallers, are less able to pursue to the end many incidental controversies which otherwise might acquire vital interest; and, except on rare occasions, the fights of Sweetbriar Gardens are not at any rate religious fights. But the line of demarcation between the two

parties is nevertheless clearly marked ; and, for example, amongst other circumstances of a disheartening character which Julian Saint-Paul and Sergeant Jollybuff, liberal-minded as they are, have had to contend against, there is this—that the Catholic party view them with suspicion and distrust. It is a singular thing, therefore, that has now come about ; for old Mr. Marrabone, who was well-known to be a devout Catholic, has left his affairs in the hands of the Sergeant and the doctor. And it becomes still more singular when it appears that old Mr. Marrabone has never in his life spoken a single word to either of them, good or bad.

The medical man who was sent for by the solicitor when he found poor old Mr. Marrabone motionless in his music-chair, pronounced him to have been so sitting there in death for twelve hours. There was placed before him a page of music ; the dead man's fingers were on the keys ; '*Et Incarnatus* ;' he had played only the first few bars ; his fingers marked a grand sad chord ; and his dead eyes—for it had been still and solemn midnight—looked

up to heaven. He had sent his message, it was plainly to be seen, in view of speedy death ; and so had sat down to die—just thus.

The last will and testament of old Mr. Marrabone, produced by his agent after a sumptuous funeral, was made long ago ; but a codicil has been added, only a few days before his decease. The substance of the will is this :—‘ For the Glory of God, and in the hope that He may be pleased through Intercession full of Grace and Love to remove His Curse from the forgotten spot in which I have so long dwelt, I desire that there shall be built upon the site of my property in Sweetbriar Gardens a Church to the Honour of All the Saints and Angels in Heaven.’ To this end he has directed that the ground shall be cleared of its buildings ; not a brick or stick thereof to be left even in the soil. By the codicil he has appointed Julian Saint-Paul and Sergeant Jollybuff to be his executors, ‘ in the full assurance that for the sake of God, to say nothing of a poor dead brother who has admired their consecrated life, they will not think of differences of belief in

the face of much greater coincidences, but will honestly do their best to redeem if it be possible from the jaws of hell some of the most miserable of mankind.' The property of old Mr. Marrabone elsewhere amounts to very many thousands of pounds ; and, by the way, the land in Sweetbriar Gardens, such is the demand for it, when taken as divested of its rotten houses, might alone be valued at ten thousand.

It is on the morning after the production of this will, therefore, that Julian Saint-Paul has been asked to meet Sergeant Jollybuff at Marrabone's, and has not been able to keep the appointment. The Sergeant was sent for by the law-agent yesterday. He was not informed further than that poor old Mr. Marrabone had expressed a wish that a certain bequest for the benefit of the poor people in Sweetbriar Gardens should be administered by him and his colleague in well-doing ; and he was requested to carry a message to the doctor appointing a meeting on the spot this morning. The lawyer, in taking this course, is no doubt bent upon proceeding in a difficult business cautiously. He

is himself a good Catholic, and he is perhaps not without apprehension with respect to his dead client's executors.

The Sergeant, therefore, has come to explain to his colleague this strange affair.

'You know,' says Julian, 'I should not have missed your appointment for any slight cause.'

'No, doctor,' says the old soldier, 'I know you wouldn't.'

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE EXECUTORSHIP.

‘AND what,’ asks Julian, ‘was the business at Marrabone’s, Sergeant?’

‘I hope it’s not the devil’s own doing,’ answers the Sergeant with a serious countenance, ‘I do hope and trust it ain’t.’

Old Mr. Marrabone’s law-agent, it seems, on meeting the old soldier this morning at the corner according to appointment, took him into the room so long occupied by the deceased, and there proceeded to the business in hand; in the hope, no doubt, that the associations of the spot might exercise an influence upon his mind in aid of the deceased gentleman’s eccentric but solemn purpose. Knowing, as he did, that the will put the executors upon honour into such a possession of the whole property of the testator as made

them in law its owners rather than trustees, he scarcely knew how to act; and when the young doctor failed to keep the appointment, he was constrained to persuade himself that he might probably after all have better fortune with the soldier alone. It may be enough to say further that he soon discovered the Sergeant to be so liberal in his views, and so entirely careless of consequences, that he could not help going into a revelation of the full particulars of the bequest. That he ought to hesitate in accepting the trust because of religious creed did not occur to the single-minded soldier at all. Old Mr. Marrabone he had seen in the street, and he had long understood that it was his strange pleasure to dwell as he did. When the lawyer reported that he had left his property for the benefit of Sweetbriar Gardens, the Sergeant expressed unaffected and boisterous joy. When it appeared that the benefit was to be brought about by building a church, he had no objection to churches. When the explanation came that he and his colleague in good works were to take charge of the enterprise, he rejoiced only the more. As the young doctor

had failed to attend the meeting, the Sergeant undertook for him that he would as eagerly as himself accept the trust, and intimated his intention of going at once to seek him in order to enlist him in the enterprise.

But as the honest Sergeant has been stumping along the streets on this errand there have come into his mind various recollections of the fact that in Sweetbriar Gardens, as in the world without, there exist unfortunately such differences of opinion upon religious questions that the doctor and he have had to be careful in many ways, and this in respect of what ought scarcely to require the wisdom of the serpent at all as distinguished from the harmlessness of the dove. In fact this train of thought has led him to remember how the young doctor's father, as he has heard, is a strong party-man; and from this it is not far that even the guileless spirit of the Sergeant has to go in order to conceive suspicions as to whether after all this whole affair may not be a snare of Satan whereby to involve himself and his colleague in the odium of controversial animosities. 'I'll see what the doctor says about it,' has been the final con-

clusion of the Sergeant ; ' the doctor he'll see his way, I'll warrant.'

' I hope it's not the devil's own doing,' says the Sergeant therefore, very gravely, in reply to Julian Saint-Paul's question ; ' I do hope and trust it ain't.'

Sir Constantine Gay is always delighted with the Sergeant. ' Hit him from the shoulder, Sergeant,' he now says ; ' he'll take a great deal of it, I know.'

' Right you are, sir,' says the Sergeant ; ' but this is the curiourest thing that's up now as ever I heerd of. Knowing of you for the doctor's true friend, I suppose I may tell it out plain, eh, doctor ?'

' Certainly.'

The Sergeant produces the card of old Mr. Marrabone's agent and tells his story. He is not interrupted, for it seems a strange story. Old Mr. Marrabone has left to the doctor and himself a vast deal of property. It is left for the benefit of Sweetbriar Gardens. They are to build a church with it. The church is to be built in honour of the Saints and the Angels. They are to build it exactly as they please ; no man is to

interfere with them. They are to do everything as they shall answer to God ; and old Mr. Marrabone is quite satisfied they will know how to do this.

At the conclusion of this strange story the two listeners seem to be not disposed to make any remark. The Sergeant has been expecting that both of them would break out into exclamations.

‘Well, at any rate,’ says the Sergeant, ‘that’s all.’

‘You are not imposing upon us, Sergeant ?’ says Sir Constantine.

‘Imposing upon ye, sir ?’ replies the Sergeant.

‘Are you sure you understand it ?’ says Julian.

‘Quite sure, doctor, quite sure. The gentleman made me tell over the whole of it afore I left, so as to be sure I did understand it. It’s a curious business, ain’t it ? To me it looks very like as if the—you know what I mean.’

The card announces the name of Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts, and Dodd, Attorneys-at-Law ; and a memorandum written

in pencil underneath signifies that it is Mr. Dodd who has presented the card to the Sergeant. As matter of fact it is well known that the Alabasters, the Banisters, and the Crumpetts of three generations have in their turn left the firm and the world for ever, and that the grandson of the original Dodd is all that is left, going officially by the name of all the dead people. It would be quite superfluous to add that this state of things indicates respectability so high as to be a guarantee for anything.

Finally, the Sergeant says, the gentleman has left it to the doctor to make any appointment he pleases, to see him either here or at his office ; and this polite way of putting the case, it is needless to say, is a fresh evidence of the high character of the firm.

It is not to be supposed that Julian's headache has entirely disappeared, but certainly such a communication as that now made by Sergeant Jollybuff ought to be enough to quiet his nerves in one way if only by having excited them in another. Still he does not seem inclined to do otherwise than think deeply over the matter.

Sir Constantine therefore speaks again.

'This is a most extraordinary affair, Julian ; you must look into it at once. You ought to go to this lawyer directly. If you don't feel well enough, my dear boy, let me go.'

Julian accepts the offer thankfully. Sir Constantine and the Sergeant set off in a cab.

Perhaps it is the sense of duty to be done that now causes the young man to recover himself ; he begins to pace up and down the floor of his room.

'I must struggle against this,' he mutters ; 'I must overcome the feeling. How can I be so foolish—so weak—so wicked—so dishonourable—so unmanly !—What is this story of the Sergeant's ? I could not catch it all somehow, but it is a serious affair.—Oh what infatuation ! How dare I cherish—? What utter imbecility !—To build a church ; very well—I can leave that to my father and Constantine—and the Professor.—Would to God I could throw this off ! Let me feel my pulse again. Not a beat lower. Oh, my head !—I suppose it is not so uncommon, after all, for a man's executors to have to

build a church. I dare say we shall manage the business easily enough.—But there is something more momentous than such business here. Oh, madness! idiotcy!—I dare say I shall be able to throw it off in a day or two. I must forget her. I have plenty to think of.—Forget her! O fool, fool, fool!—I could shed tears like a child.—Oh that I could die and have done with this dreadful world!

## CHAPTER VIII.

## A VISIT FROM THE AUNTS.

A TWO-WHEELED CAB is drawing up at the moment under Julian's window. Aunt Gracie is leaning forward and staring up in search of her beloved nephew ; and, as curiosity prompts him to look out, she nods to him half a dozen times while the cabman is pulling up a somewhat uneasy horse, till a last jerk throws her violently against Aunt Glorie behind, upon which both the ladies utter a little scream and become highly incensed against the cabman.

'How dare you, man!' exclaims Aunt Glorie, as she descends with a flushed countenance and a disordered bonnet ; 'where are the police ?'

'All right, mum,' replies cabby ; ' 'osses will be 'osses, mum, like the rest on us.'

‘Shameful!’ exclaims Aunt Gracie, descending in her turn with a countenance still more flushed and a bonnet still more disordered, ‘you bad man!’

‘I’ve a good mind not to pay your fare,’ says Aunt Glorie majestically, handling her purse.

‘No, you haven’t, mum; you ain’t adoin’ of yourself justice, mum; nor yet the other lady, you ain’t.’

‘Oh, but I assure you,’ says Aunt Gracie, ‘you will find yourself mistaken. Although maiden ladies——’

‘Gracie!’ says Miss Glorieuse, ‘how can you? What’s your fare, coachman?’

‘To you, mum, it’s only three-and-six.’

‘That makes how many miles?’ says Miss Gracieuse.

‘Gracie! allow me, if you please. You mean eighteenpence, coachman.’

‘Yes, mum; that’s what I say, mum, exactly.’

‘You said three-and-six,’ says Miss Gracieuse.

‘Yes, mum; two at eighteen-pence, and a

feed o' corn, mum. Lor' bless ye! look at that 'oss!

Miss Glorieuse looks at the man instead, in her very loftiest manner.

'You very bad man!' says Miss Gracieuse.

'Well, then, I'll leave it too ye, pretty lady,' says the man with a gesture of ineffable frankness; 'I can't say no fairer, can I?'

Miss Glorieuse regards the man with unspeakable disdain.

'Well, I'll leave it to *you*, mum; and a 'andsomer woman——'

'Hold your tongue, you audacious disreputable person! There's your money. My nephew shall write to the newspapers. What's your number?'

'Nine thousand, mum, nine 'undred, mum, and ninety-nine, mum; four nines, mum; you can't forget it, can ye?'

'Very well, sir, you shall hear from us.'

'Werry pleased to 'ear from either on ye, ladies, I'm sure, and so might any man as 'as a hye in his 'ed.'

Julian is quite aware of the custom of his aunts to ride in two-wheel cabs, and invariably to get into dispute with the driver; at last,

however, he has the satisfaction of welcoming the good ladies on the stair-landing, and of showing them in to his room with such an amount of recovered composure as he hopes may conceal the traces of previous agitation.

‘My dear aunts, I am delighted to see you.’

The ladies seat themselves. Miss Gracieuse takes out her smelling-bottle. ‘Those dreadful cabmen!’ she says.

‘Very rude men,’ says Miss Glorieuse.

‘Shocking,’ says Miss Gracieuse; ‘and I do believe the creature smoked a pipe behind us all the way!’

‘Do you know, Gracie, the same thing struck me!’

‘I’m sure of it.’

‘Fancy how we must have looked!’

‘Let me put your bonnet right, dear.’

‘Thanks, dear. Now let me put yours right. Of all the disreputable things in this disreputable world, the *most* disreputable, in my opinion, is a cabman!’

‘Thanks, dear. And how do you do, Julian?’

‘And how have you been, Julian?’

‘ I am not so well this morning.’

‘ Poor dear boy ! let me look at you.’

‘ Darling ! you do look ill.’

‘ A slight headache ; it may pass off presently.’

‘ Poor dear ! working too hard, I know,’ says Aunt Gracie ; ‘ I’m sure of it, you thoughtless boy.’

‘ That nasty place you go to, Julian,’ says Aunt Glorie ; ‘ do you think, now, there’s any fever in it, or smallpox, or cholera morbus ? I’m sure it must be full of such things.’

‘ Yes, dear Julian,’ says Aunt Gracie, ‘ we think it is very good of you, you know, to do what you do ; it can’t be denied, dear ; but do take care of yourself. Think of Madonna. Think of your poor aunties, dear.’

Julian answers all this with little else than heavy sighs. ‘ Yes,’ he says, ‘ yes ; yes.’

Miss Glorieuse seems to make up her mind to do something desperate. Casting a single glance at her sister, as if to signify that she is about to take an important step and must be supported, ‘ Julian,’ says Aunt Glorie emphatically, ‘ I see what it is.’

‘ And so do I,’ says Aunt Gracie.

‘Yes, dear, no one could help seeing it.’

No, dear.’

‘The sooner you do it, the better, Julian.’

‘What?’ says Julian absently.

‘Bless the boy!’ exclaims Miss Glorieuse.

‘What, indeed?’ exclaims Miss Gracieuse.

‘As if you didn’t know what we mean, you sly boy!’

‘I’m afraid I am going to be ill,’ says the young man.

‘Good gracious, Julian!’ cries Aunt Glorie, ‘what can be the matter with you?’

‘Darling boy!’ cries Aunt Gracie, ‘darling boy! Try my smelling-salts, do.’

‘Do, dear boy,’ says Aunt Glorie; ‘try mine.’

Julian reclines on a couch, and—in pity to himself—affects to be drowsy.

‘Sh!’ says Aunt Glorie faintly.

‘Sh!’ says Aunt Gracie, more faintly, by way of echo.

They remain in silence for a few minutes; the young man breathes heavily; he seems to be asleep.

‘Helpless creatures,’ whispers Aunt Glorie.

‘Most helpless,’ whispers Aunt Gracie.

‘Something must be done,’ whispers Aunt Glorie.

‘And soon,’ whispers Aunt Gracie.

‘The sooner the better.’

‘I think so, dear.’

‘Poor dear boy!’

‘Poor dear boy!’

‘How nice he looks!’

‘Doesn’t he!’

‘I do wish he would give up that filthy place.’

‘So do I.’

‘Nasty drunken things!’

‘Horrid!’

‘Mere animals.’

‘Scarcely that.’

‘I shall give that old soldier a good talking to.’

‘I would indeed, dear.’

‘It’s one’s duty, Gracie.’

‘It is indeed, Glorie.’

‘Sh!’

‘Sh!’

The good souls regard their nephew for some minutes more in absolute silence.

At length there is a tap at the door. Aunt

Gracie hurries on tiptoe to open it noiselessly. It is the Sergeant, and he utters a hilarious exclamation of surprise.

‘Hush!’ says Aunt Gracie, ‘he’s asleep.’

‘Come in, Sergeant,’ says Julian, but without rising.

‘Now pray don’t disturb yourself, dear Julian,’ says Aunt Glorie; ‘bother the man!’

‘I’m better now,’ the young man says, sitting up, ‘come in, Sergeant. I feel much better now.’

By this time Sir Constantine also has come upstairs, and he and the Sergeant enter together. The Baronet is warmly welcomed by the ladies.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SIR CONSTANTINE'S REPORT.

‘WELL, my dear friend,’ says Julian, evidently not a little relieved, ‘how have you got on?’

After explaining to the ladies the strange affair in hand, Sir Constantine delivers his report, almost more strange, he says, still.

They have seen the lawyer. The Sergeant's account of the matter was quite correct. Old Mr. Marrabone has indeed bequeathed to the two philanthropists of Sweetbriar Gardens a very considerable amount of property. He directs it to be devoted first to building a church with a house for the clergy. The remainder of the bequest he desires to be invested for endowment. The church is to be dedicated to All Saints and Angels. His body is to be eventually buried in it; and the pitiful prayers of worshippers are requested

to be offered up for his eternal rest. There is, of course, says Sir Constantine, nothing peculiar about the scheme as the act of a devout Roman Catholic ; but the appointment of executors seems to him to be a thing which demands very serious consideration.

‘Why so ?’ says Julian.

‘The responsibility, my dear boy ; the trouble.’

‘I want something to occupy my mind just now,’ is Julian’s reply.

‘Something to occupy your mind !’ exclaims Miss Glorieuse ; ‘I should have thought, Julian——’

‘Yes, dear,’ interposes Miss Gracieuse ; ‘I understand our dear boy ; he means to give up the other ; don’t you see ?’

‘Oh ! very well,’ says Miss Glorieuse.

‘I want,’ says Julian, ‘more work—more work !’

‘Right you are, doctor,’ says the Sergeant.

‘More work—more work—more work—and I shall get over this.’

‘Tell the doctor and the ladies,’ says Sergeant Jollybuff to Sir Constantine, ‘about the old man.’

The gossip of the women grouped around the door in White Sparrow Street was not far from the mark. Cruel death had divided him from earthly love, and he had lived a hermit's life thereafter ; with penances, and holy books, and holy music ; in the midst of wreck and ruin and despair !

He was a gentleman of some position. In early life he devoted himself to beneficent works. His charities were manifold ; his personal labours unceasing. The pleasures of the world he rejected ; its honours he despised. To do good was his divine worship ; and he performed his task with courage and pride.

Julian Saint-Paul has riveted his eyes upon the face of his friend. Sergeant Jollybuff, after his manner, expresses quaint approval. The ladies exchange glances, and say in a subdued tone, ' Poor man !'

' He formed a deep attachment to a lady ; she reciprocated it ; they were worthy of each other.' Sir Constantine is speaking somewhat sorrowfully.

' Dear, dear !' says Miss Gracieuse ; ' it's always the same story.'

‘Yes,’ says Miss Glorieuse.

‘They were about to be united. Another lady——’ Julian starts to his feet !

‘Some other lady attracted his attention ; no one could tell how. He became infatuated.’

‘O God !’ exclaims Julian ; ‘yes!’

‘His betrothed was not slow to see the change in him. She drooped ; died.’

Julian seats himself again ; covers his face with his hands.

‘That is all,’ says Sir Constantine.

‘Yes,’ says the Sergeant, ‘and enough too. And so the poor gentleman he did all he could to make amends for the mischief, don’t ye see ? He couldn’t bring back the dead to life, could he ? So he gave himself to be as good as dead for ever.’

‘He wandered for some years from place to place all over the world,’ Sir Constantine continues ; ‘not only finding no rest, but seeking none. At last he established himself in the ruinous hermitage at Sweetbriar Gardens ; and there wore out his life—for he was not the old man he seemed—in remorse and prayer.’

‘And all,’ exclaims Miss Glorieuse pas-

sionately, 'through a bad woman! Of all the wicked things in this wicked world, the *most* wicked, in my opinion, is a woman!'

'Poor dear man!' says Miss Gracieuse.

Julian has fallen prostrate on the floor!

The commotion need not be described. The Sergeant hurries for the nearest medical man. The patient passes into a deep sleep.

## CHAPTER X.

## ANOTHER DREAM.

HIS EXCELLENCY the Ambassador Extraordinary is seated in his chamber this afternoon. It is a sunny afternoon ; the sunshine streams in at the casements. Birds are singing in the trees without ; Lais lies dozing on the terrace ; otherwise there is silence and solitude.

Some one appears to have entered. He is haggard and sad ; and his eyes are wild—not angry, but burning with a strange agony.

‘Viscount Malign,’ he says in a whisper, ‘where is she ?’

‘Where is *she* ?’

‘Madonna !—No, the Countess Titania.—No, Madonna—O Madonna mine !—No—I—I mean—Help me, Viscount—tell me what I mean !’

The Viscount Malign smiles—that is all.

‘Is this—is this—Viscount—is this—delirium?’

‘Oh no,’ says the Viscount airily; ‘it is not delirium.’

‘Is it—can it be—explained at all?’

‘Easily.’

‘It is like—like—may I say madness?’

‘That would be quite unphilosophical, young man.’

‘Fatuity?’

‘Infatuation.’

‘Infatuation—What then is infatuation?’

‘Shall I mention an example?’

‘Do.’

‘There is a feeling called by common people—Love.’

‘Oh yes! the holiest fantasy on earth!’

‘Quite so; and the hollowest.’

‘Nay, surely; not as I have known it.’

‘Quite unsubstantial, visionary, vain; a snare if anything at all.’

‘A snare? If anything at all?’

‘What is the philosophy of it? You are a physician, and must know.’

‘Has it a philosophy?’

‘How can you suppose otherwise? You are a physician, I say—a physiologist—a philosopher; how can it be otherwise?’

‘No doubt, Viscount Malign; what then?’

‘It is a trap, the wise will say.’

‘A trap that ends in——’

‘Only in cradles. The word is not mine; I had it from a simple old grandmother. A snare that spreads all through this foolish, turbulent world. Here, leading over fair green hills, down sunny valleys, all abroad on infinite misty plains of dreamy beauty; there, following dark defiles, ascending toilsome paths of tortuous rock, skirting the fearful precipice, crossing the dark swollen streams that come from caves of fate. Pitfalls everywhere; entanglements and lacerating thorns; poisons and cruel pestilences. Inebriation at the very best, if nothing more, and frivolous foolishness; vacant laughter and witless dalliance. And all to end—in cradles!’

‘I cannot understand.’

‘Do not try. Take it without understanding; or, without understanding, leave it. Why should you understand? No one else does.’

‘Dear Viscount Malign, have pity on me. Where is she?’

‘Fool!’

They are mutually silent for a few moments. Julian suddenly speaks again.

‘Did you ever know one called Mr. Marabone?’

‘I knew him well.’

His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary, like all the world perhaps, seems to be in a sportive humour this sunny afternoon; he laughs aloud. The little birds are singing merrily without. The green trees smile under the sun. On the smooth lawn the bright light twinkles amongst the springing blades of grass. The river sweeps by joyously. The very hills beyond, dim as they are in the haze, caress the clouds in play. It is only in harmony therefore with nature all around, if the Viscount Malign laughs pleasantly. But why laugh about poor, old, dead Mr. Marabone?

‘I knew him a good many years ago,’ says Viscount Malign. ‘He was a young man then, and took the fancy to be virtuous.’

‘Took the fancy?’

‘Took the fancy—to be a champion of virtue—always a dangerous thing, even in a hypocrite—much more in an honest man. It attracts attention. Men become jealous. Angels observe, no doubt; but so do—others.’

‘To be a champion of virtue, Viscount, surely in this world of vice—surely the very devils——’

‘There lies the blunder. Were this a world of virtue it would be welcome; but in what you are pleased to call a world of vice—How pleasantly the sun is shining!’

‘And what of the poor old man?’

‘He, by the way, did not at any rate give offence to Holy Mother Church,’ says the Viscount as if in soliloquy. ‘Let me advise you, young man. Always be on the side of the priest. Pay him his due reverence, and as much more as you conveniently can; but then keep out of his way.’

‘Alas! you are pleased to trifle with me, when my heart is so sick!’

‘The poor old man—so you call him—was in the prime of human pride and courage. He was to amend this little world; for he

thought—like you—it very much needed amending.’

‘Indeed it does.’

‘Beware ; leave it alone ; leave it to Time.’

‘I cannot leave it alone ; I cannot leave it to Time.’

‘As you please. He was a vain man.’

‘We are all vain, I fear.’

‘He was vain. “Behold me, angels!” such a man exclaims. “Behold *me* contending with Fate! I am thus little; but see how great I can be! I have been made thus little; but behold how great I can make myself! A good man struggling against Destiny—what a spectacle I am!” Your friend spoke to himself in this way.’

‘Is it not a goodly spectacle?’

‘“Behold this atom fighting those great Fiends! Behold and wonder! *I* change the face of nature—*I* turn the stream of appointed destiny—*I* frighten back the soldiers of—” How is the Sergeant?’

‘The good man is as he always is—hard-working and happy in the midst of misery; truly a brave soldier and a conquering one!’

‘How should you like to see the brave

soldier tried a little under true fire? To see him conquering the great enemy by dashing his honest foolish head against a stone?

‘A most single-hearted creature——’

‘True, and there lies the difference. Conquering by weakness, not by strength; by blindness, not sagacity; by very foolishness, and no wisdom or knowledge of any sort in all the world; an unassailable man.’

The Viscount laughs happily at the unassailability of the old soldier.

‘A most worthy man indeed, Viscount Malign.

‘Let us impose a little trouble, now, upon the good man by way of pleasantry; give him a twinge of gout or gravel, and make him howl; provoke him to private wrath, and make him swear; persuade him into prison, or into the poorhouse, and make him weep; it would be easily done. But this is what I say—to what end? None at all. It might be amusing, but that is superficial sport; under the surface the good man is unassailable; there is nothing to strike.’

‘He pities the poor.’

‘Heaven can do no more, Julian Saint-

Paul ; Hell no less ! Why do not you pity the poor as simply as the soldier does ?

‘ I am a man of higher position—higher education—higher responsibilities. I cannot deny my mission.’

‘ Exactly so. Be wise, young man, even yet——’

‘ Viscount Malign, what is this that returns upon me ?’

‘ Be wise, young man ; pity the poor as simply as the soldier does. Cast to the winds this—*mission*.’

‘ I cannot ; I have it from Heaven. I feel that I must do my part or die ! This world of ours has a glorious future in the hand of destiny—in the kindly hand of God. I have my little part to do towards this——’

‘ Bah ! leave it to Time—and——*the Avenger !*’

‘ I cannot leave it even in the hands—with reverence let it be said—in the hands of Heaven ; it is my mission to do my part, and it shall be done ; little it may be, and hard to do, but it must be done !’

‘ There is but one reply to such a boast.’

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‘I do not boast. Believe me, I do not mean to boast.’

‘There is but one reply to what that is; whether a boast or not a boast, there is but one reply. He who holds conspicuously the flag of Heaven must of necessity become a conspicuous mark for the shafts of—But we were speaking of the dead old man.’

‘Yes. He died for love after all, they say.’

‘Scarcely; *she* died of broken heart, and he—he fell a victim merely. He aspired; he soared; he fell; he broke his bones.’

‘Why should he fall?’

Because he soared. Our soldier does not soar; he cannot fall. Leave me, young man, and think of what I say; although it is but a dream, think of it. Descend from your eminence—it is but a tombstone; hide your head amidst the grasses and the moss; and even yet the bitter wind may pass you by.’

## CHAPTER XI.

## ALL AT FAULT.

JULIAN SAINT-PAUL lies very ill. Sir Constantine is a constant friend. Sergeant Jollybuff loses a good deal of his jollity. He says the devil is at the bottom of this if he ever was at the bottom of anything. He cannot get on without the doctor ; Sweetbriar Gardens seem to grow worse and worse every day, and the people crookeder and crookeder, so that he is half in the mind to give them up and carry his knapsack into some less barbarous region, having no particular mission of his own there more than anywhere else, and no particular courage to support him in such deep and dirty water.

The sick man speaks a great deal of his mission, and of the courage which he intends to maintain in spite of difficulties. It is his

great consolation in his sickness. He will strive to get well again; Heaven will help him; for he has much to do. The old soldier is greatly at a loss. The poor are suffering; the sick are neglected; the Sergeant says plainly, 'The Devil is gaining ground'—words which in his honest mouth have a meaning—'gaining ground, don't you see!'

But at times, and with short intervals, the sick man's spirits are more depressed. What has happened to him Sir Constantine cannot discover. The Sergeant knows of nothing except it be that the poor doctor has been poisoned with some of the dainties at the great man's dinner the night before he fell ill. Professor Gay knows of nothing; he himself was not in any way poisoned—never ate a better dinner in his life, or a more wholesome one. Master Georgius the Architect knows of nothing; everything in the house was lamentably secular and classic, and a few of the things might be called profane, but even that would scarcely in his opinion upset a man's health in these days when men were so far from being particular;

in the thirteenth century it might have been different.

Sir Constantine has his suspicions, as we know; and he goes as far as honour will permit in endeavouring to lead Julian towards some revelation. But he is disappointed. When the fit of depression comes on, the young man's agony of mind is sometimes intense, but his speech is still unintelligible. He wanders a little at times, and then his utterances seem to indicate self-reproach, or even remorse. The landlady, who nurses him, says he has been crossed in love, poor dear! at least that is her opinion. The medical man thinks she is very likely to be right. The landlady says she has heard him cry out piteously in his sleep, 'Oh, take her away—take her away in mercy!' and again, 'What shall I do? How can I live without her?'

## CHAPTER XII.

## STILL ALL AT FAULT.

SIR CONSTANTINE makes up his mind what to do. 'My dear cousin,' he says to Madonna one day, 'I am sorry to say poor Julian is very ill.'

'I am very sorry, Constantine, very sorry.'

'I fear he has some sad grief on his mind.'

Madonna puts her handkerchief to her eyes.  
(*'She is guilty,'* thinks Sir Constantine.)

'I need not say——' sobs the young girl; but she can say no more. (*'Clearly,'* he thinks, *'it is so.'*)

'Julian ought to be,' says Sir Constantine, 'very—what shall I say?—considerately treated.'

'I am afraid he is very sensitive,' replies Madonna. (*'Going to excuse her conduct.'*)

'Do you know of anything, Madonna, that

can have wounded his feelings?' ('That's a plain question at any rate.')

'I know of nothing—I can think of nothing.' ('Of course not. But I'm surprised at a girl like Madonna; I'm afraid they are all alike.')

'I've seen it so many times, you know, that a thoughtless word—I won't say a thoughtless act—has in fact knocked a fellow over in the most remarkable way, especially a fellow like Julian.'

'Why especially like Julian, Constantine?' ('Hang it! the girl can't be casting him off like this! I can't believe it.')

'A fellow of very exalted mind, let me tell you, cousin.' Sir Constantine speaks in sorrow, but with a little of something like severity.

'I know that, Constantine,' says Madonna with a heavy sigh. ('Astounding how coolly they take it; but I think I'm making an impression.')

'When such a man—excuse me, Madonna—forms an attachment, you know——'

Madonna bursts into tears. ('I've done it at last.')

The passionate sobs of the young girl are for a few moments distressing to witness. Her cousin thinks he will leave such wholesome emotion to produce its effect. ('This will do,' he says to himself; 'I shall have her coming round to her duty presently.')

Madonna looks up in his face, her eyes swollen with honest, womanly distress.

'We've always been very good friends, dear Constantine,' she says; 'you won't betray me, will you? I couldn't help it, I cannot help it!' And she grasps his hand.

Sir Constantine is a little touched by her grief; in spite of the conviction now forced upon him that she has wilfully jilted his friend and can only say she cannot help it.

'Cannot help it!' he says, his own voice faltering; 'cannot help it! That is always the word.'

'What can you mean, Constantine? How strangely you speak!'

'I mean that Julian Saint-Paul deserves better treatment.' This is said angrily.

'Constantine, you know my secret now. Need I say how I wish I could help him?' ('So heartless!' he says to himself; 'who could

have thought it! They are the most extraordinary creatures!')

'I am afraid, Madonna, I can say no more.'

'Tell him, dear cousin Constantine—we were always very good friends—tell him, if you think it would soothe him, that I pray for him night and day.'

'I must say, Madonna, that I cannot understand you girls. Upon my word—I hope you won't be offended—but you seem to think a man's heart can be mended like—I beg your pardon—but I do think you ought to have more consideration for a man like Julian.'

'What can you mean? If you think I am unworthy of him, Constantine, I know it!'

'Well, I must say, I think——'

'I could be his servant, Constantine,' says weeping Madonna; 'don't betray me—I know you won't—but do you think they would let me go and nurse him? They don't know how I love him! He is all I have in the world!'

'My dear cousin! what have I been saying? Do you mean it? What a fool I am!

Why, God bless me! I thought you had brought all this about——'

'What!'

'By some thoughtless flirtation, perhaps——'

'Constantine! Thoughtless flirtation!'

'Well, my dear soul, certainly your conversation to-day——'

'My conversation to-day!'

'I must be a great fool, Madonna, but I really thought your language pointed that way. I'm sure I beg your pardon a thousand times if I'm wrong.'

'If you are wrong, dear cousin Constantine!'

'Well, I hope I am wrong.'

'I hope you are, indeed!' Madonna's eyes for a moment flash through her tears.

'My dear cousin, I ought to be ashamed of myself.'

'I think you ought!'

'And you have not been jilting Julian?'

'I am very angry with you, Constantine! I am dreadfully angry with you! I will never speak to you again! How could you be so wicked!'

Sir Constantine has never seen his cousin so much excited as this since she was quite a little girl, little enough to be teased by a grown-up cousin. He throws himself back therefore in his chair and laughs outright.

‘Upon my word,’ cries Madonna, burying her face in her handkerchief, ‘I—I—I——’

Sir Constantine takes her hand in a cousinly way in both of his. ‘My dearest creature,’ he says feelingly, ‘we have indeed been playing at cross purposes in a most extraordinary manner. It is all my fault. Let me explain for a single moment, Poor Julian is very much cut up—of that there is no doubt. Knowing something of his feelings towards you, I concluded—excuse me—I see I was wrong—in point of fact it is a mistake evidently.’

‘Tell me, Constantine, does he speak of me?’

This is a plain question, in its turn, not easily answered. For Julian, as matter of fact, does not speak of Madonna; and that, when Sir Constantine comes to reflect for a moment, is the cause of the mystery. How shall he answer this plain question?

‘ He speaks, poor fellow ! of his duty to the people in Sweetbriar Gardens more than of anything else.’

‘ But does he never mention me at all ?’

‘ He would scarcely do so to me, would he ?’

Madonna sighs and looks wistfully away.

‘ He is a very reserved fellow, you know, at any time.’

‘ I am always thinking of him,’ she murmurs as if to herself ; ‘ but of course he is so ill.’

‘ He would take pains to conceal it, you know, would he not ?’

‘ Do you think I might go to see him ?’

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE PARSON'S LETTER.

PARSON JOHN JACOB is greatly grieved to hear of his son's indisposition, and writes him a letter :

‘ MY DEAR SON,

‘ I have heard with much sorrow that you are for the moment laid on a bed of sickness. I do not hurry to see you, as some foolish fathers might ; this would but display my own weakness and encourage yours. Keep up your spirits, my boy, and let me know when you are well enough to see me quite in the old way ; and I will come to you unless you forbid me, as then you are likely to do. Our unfortunate relative has gone to the Eternal City. We can readily imagine what's in the wind. Amongst those

unhappy people, a man who refuses to be a bishop—doing so in vernacular language, and, in so far as such a man can be sincere, sincerely—must be sent for to see what he means. Paul means magnifying his office. He has got the whip-hand of somebody, you may be assured. But we will wait his return. My little manifesto on the recent incident I have entitled “*Nolo Episcopari*, or Not a Bishop, but a Pope”; and it will be ready by his return. God has given to me much vigour of thought in its composition; and if I had not long ago despaired of Paul, I might think it ought to work some effect upon his mind. But this is not to be dreamt of, I know. The devil's contract is signed, sealed, and delivered long ago; and is being well carried out on both sides, as any one can see for himself. But you will be interested to hear that I have fallen out with the Earl, or rather that his Lordship has with me—for I never fall out with anybody. The poor gentleman has taken offence at one of my sermons, and now takes himself off to some other parish—I care not to know where—to hear the gospel delivered more to his

liking. What my own doctrine was that gave him offence I care not to ask, but I have not failed to deliver my message honestly since—I mean in respect of schismatics. I am not to be dictated to in my own pulpit by earl any more than churl; and so I told his Lordship, and will tell him again if need be. But the cause, I suspect, lies deeper. For his Lordship has had quarrels with his poorer tenants in respect of that mean abomination to the cultivator—however savoury—rabbits; and I do not disguise from you that I spoke a word in season on the subject, there being a powerful figure of speech put into my mouth at the moment to the effect that he who took his pleasure in the shooting of long-eared vermin might just as well go forth at once and shoot some equally long-eared farmer who submissively came in his way, equally unable to defend himself and not equally able to escape. I thought it a palpable hit; but my lord said it tended to stir up sedition. My lady, however, who has some sense of decency, has come to me privately and supplicated for peace; and I dare say I shall have to surrender at discretion, as is generally

my lot. I may all the more readily do so, moreover, because honest old Chuckberry, who is my people's warden just now, and who is half-ruined by the bunnies, tells me my lady has ordered them to be destroyed, my lord not daring to say nay, which is thought to be a triumphant end to the business, and therefore all that one need desire. So keep up, my dear son, I say, keep up and forget not the high duties you have undertaken in the protection of your own poor clients against enemies almost worse than rabbits. And concerning what Sir Constantine tells me of the inexplicable bequest made to you by that benevolent if benighted gentleman for the building of a Popish church withal, I can only say that I am sure my boy will do his duty; but what that duty is I do not suggest. A house of God, for whatever form of His worship, can never come amiss; and men who do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God, after the manner of their fathers, may have less concern about creed than honesty. The good man had his own faith; and it is but just that that should be the faith of his money—being all he leaves

behind him instead of progeny. But, my dear boy, beware of those who have come into that fold, such as it is, not entering by the door of nativity, but climbing over the wall by their own perversity. Our relative will be too great a man to trouble himself with such a matter, I dare say ; he has gone to headquarters after promotion, and I care not if he never returns ; but there may be others of his kidney to fight shy of. I think Sir Constantine's plan of leaving the whole affair to the lawyer would work best of all. Commend me to the honest Sergeant, and tell him to be not weary of his good fight. I call him one of Heaven's skirmishers ; let him cling tenaciously to every stick and stone like a good soldier, and yield not an inch of ground to the enemy.'

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MONSIGNORE MUSES.

MONSIGNORE SAINT-PAUL walks in the gardens of the Vatican ; alone ; musing on many things. His journey to the Eternal City has been successful. He is in high favour with the Curia ; they rely upon him greatly for the welfare of their holy cause ; he shall be amply rewarded some day. His policy is fully approved ; a few more years of labour in the West, and room may be made for him at headquarters ; and *then !*

‘Well, I wonder what the Viscount is doing. Busy, busy, busy, I dare say.—And his Royal Highness ; a praiseworthy prince, but not likely, as I gather here, to acquire of his own merit the exalted position he deserves ; not likely, therefore, without help, to be of service to us.—I wonder if the next

pamphlet has come out yet. They tell me I should put a stop to this. How can I put a stop to anything there? One simple-minded old creature here counsels me to prosecute my dear uncle for defamation of Holy Church. Imagine me under cross-examination! Roars of laughter, in which the bench joined! No, no, no! There are one or two historical remedies that might avail; but they are out of fashion, the more's the pity.—I wonder how little Julian gets on. He used to sit upon my knee and call me Cousin Paul. Pretty Titania! She has made the poor boy sick. Too luscious. Surfeit. Well, the Viscount will instruct her better, I dare say. The boy will recover, and Titania must assault him a little more gingerly. The charming Countess is for once a little too earnest. Or he is too earnest—that may be the matter. What a wreck it will be!—And the lady—ha, ha! and the Count Oberon! I never should have thought of that. The Viscount possesses infinite *finesse*; he ought to have been in the Church!

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE VISCOUNT MUSES.

HIS EXCELLENCY VISCOUNT MALIGN walks on his terrace at Mount Medusa by the River—Lais at his side—musing on many things.

‘ Monsignore is making his way, I do not doubt. He writes me somewhat jubilantly. He dreams, I dare say, of red stockings ; and of that foolish hat they wear—most unpriest-like of all things mundane ! Yes, the times move apace. My lord is a statesman, and moves with the times. My lord is a great statesman, and his hand helps even to move the times. Gentle Lais, what is the matter with thine eyes ? Am I speaking of a friend of thine, fair fury ? Why should thine eyes gleam in the bright sun ? Wait till thou hast him in the dark, and then show thy teeth !

—Ah! a few more years, and where will this great lord be?—Our young physician is very ill, I hear.—A most charming woman!—Down, Lais! jealous of a charming woman? Fie, fie!—The pretty Countess will betake herself to the feet of Monsignore so soon as he returns; will be much consoled by his dear lordship's absolution; will go away all in bewitching tears. And the Count—a delightful young man! What, pouting, Lais? The fine gentleman is not worthy of thy hiss, shrewd Lais? Be it so.'

## CHAPTER XVI.

## , AN ARCHITECT'S HOME.

SIR CONSTANTINE GAY, as a man of the world, has advised his sick friend to trouble himself as little as possible about old Mr. Marrabone's scheme of church-building, and to leave the whole affair in the very good hands of Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts and Dodd. The Sergeant, being altogether at a loss in such an enterprise, is only too glad to fall in with the proposal.

In the meantime the circumstances and conditions of the Marrabone bequest have got into the newspapers, and thus reach the ears, if not the eyes, of Master Georgius Oldhousen the Architect. In fact the Reverend Theo, his brother, brings him the intelligence.

'By Jupiter!' says Georgius, 'Julian

Saint-Paul, do you say? That's a job for me.'

'What do you mean?' says Theo.

'Why, this is what I mean, old fellow,' replies Georgius, in the act of changing his coat to go forth instantly, 'this is what I mean—there's no time to be lost. Before the day's half over, you know, there will be twenty architects trying for that job, every one stirring up his friends in all directions. It's a shame to poach upon one's connection in such a way; but I'll be off to Julian Saint-Paul and secure him at once.'

'I should have thought,' says Theo, apparently somewhat scandalised, 'that such a thing as the erection of a consecrated edifice would be contemplated in a less worldly manner, George.'

'Should you? Very well, old boy, do; I have no objection; but the fact is that we are such a lot of fools just now (it was not so in the ancient times, you know), and every one of us so wrapped up in his own insufferable conceit (I can answer for all but one), that a job like this will attract all sorts of fellows like bluebottles round a jampot.'

‘But not architects of our own Church, George?’

‘Why not?’

‘To build a Romish place?’ says the Reverend Theo, as they emerge into the street.

‘Ah! to build a Mahommedan place for that matter; or Hindoo, or Parsee, or anything you like. But what do you mean by Romish, old fellow?’

‘Well, of course—I needn’t say, George—’

‘Why of course you needn’t say? Ain’t we all Romish, as you call it? Where did our people get their churches, Theo?’ (dropping his eyeglass).

‘If you look at it in that broad light, George, I agree with you no doubt. At the same time I am myself a Via-Median, according to my lights; and I think I should hesitate, if I were a Via-Median architect——’

‘Via-Median fiddlestick! There’s no such thing, old fellow. There are Pagan architects and Christian architects; and I’m a Christian architect. And you’re a Christian priest, old chap’ (refixing his glass), ‘that’s what you are. And I’ll tell you as we walk

along how I'm going to manage this church of Julian Saint-Paul's. I'm going in for universal Gregorianism.'

Georgius lets his glass fall here with a prodigious rattle.

'Do you mean that the people may hear well, George?'

'O Lord no! People hear best in a Baptist conventicle, with a preaching-tub in the middle and galleries all round; I'm going in for giving everything a Gregorian effect; not only the music and prayers, but the sermon and so on, and especially the ten commandments.'

'I don't quite understand, George.'

'I didn't say you did. The fact is—it's the same in everything—you ain't half quaint enough. I take my stand upon universal Gregorianism, and I say—there's my whole scheme.'

'I've no doubt it's a good scheme, George; all your schemes are good schemes; they go in so much, in my opinion, for advanced spirituality.'

'They're essentially ancient, you know, and quaint.'

‘Just so ; we find everything in the old time to have gone in for picturesqueness, don’t we ?’

‘Of course ; the old men went in for that in everything,’ says the architect, refixing his glass ; ‘it was all knock-me-down, you know ; no shilly-shallying, and elegance, and refinement, and grace, and other sorts of humbug. Don’t I wish I had been born in the thirteenth century ! Imagine the pleasure of living in a house without a blessed iota of all these modern conveniences and comforts in it ! I do my best, Theo, in my own Hall, you know, to imitate such a state of things, especially at night ; but, you know, it ought to be something altogether different. To tell you the truth, I’ve got out the plans for building a detached place in our back garden as soon as I can spare the money. It will be magnificent !’

‘In the back garden ?’ exclaims Theo, astonished.

‘Yes : there’s just room for a small manor’ (dropping his glass), ‘with about three feet of a passage or slype on each side.’

‘I should like to see what you would make

of such a thing, George, immensely. I know you would do something remarkably good.'

'Yes; I'll describe it to you. Of course, old fellow, in our station we must go in for modesty, you know.'

'Of course. You could add to it afterwards, as you got on.'

'Well, perhaps so; but look here.' (Georgius reflexes his glass.) 'At all events, you go up to the door, you know, along the three feet passage from the garden steps, by a sort of quaint path formed of a kind of pebbles set on end.'

'Yes, I know.'

'No you don't indeed; not in the way I shall do it; you mean what we call pebble-paving, all of a size and neatly laid at so much a yard.'

'Yes.'

'I thought so. Well, that won't do; oh dear no! Laid, I won't say anyhow, but quaintly, you know, odds and evens—'

'Picturesquely done.'

'More than that—I don't like to say uncomfortably, you know, but that's as near my meaning as modern humbugging language

will come' (dropping his glass); 'don't you see?'

'I think I understand you, George.'

'Not at all likely; but never mind——'

'I mean the sort that would make you wear—perhaps wooden shoes.'

'Well, that's your way of putting it, and it ain't bad for you. But at all events, when you've lifted a ponderous wooden latch, old fellow, you enter—the whole thing's built of stone, of course——'

'Oh, of course.'

'You enter the hall,' says Georgius, refixing his glass. 'We eat in it, sit in it, work in it, cook in it, and sleep in it, and of course dress and undress in it, and do the washing.'

'I suppose that was really the way.'

'Oh yes; and I shall carry on all my business in it. We shall have one hand-maiden, probably an elderly peasant, you know; but we can rig up a curtain of course, to shut her off from the clerks, and to enclose her at night. It will be very fine, won't it? (Dropping his glass.)

'I see exactly what you mean.'

'I'm not so sure you do, old fellow; but

let it pass. Well, this hall is to be four-and-twenty feet by fourteen, and sixteen feet high, and the door enters in the middle of one side with a back door in one corner opposite, leading out into the other three feet slype as a sort of sloppy yard. Then there are windows—very small with no glass in them—along both sides ; and——’

‘The fire at one end, of course.’

‘Your noddle at one end ! What are you thinking of?’

‘I beg your pardon, George, I forgot.’

‘If there’s anything I hate,’ says the architect, getting warm, ‘it’s the way in which these confounded modern conveniences cling to a fellow’s better feelings, in spite of everything ; and all one can do to root them out seems to be in vain.’ The Architect slowly and sadly refixes his eyeglass.

‘I beg your pardon, George ; I remember now, the fire is in the middle of the room.’

‘Well, I’m glad to see that your memory is not quite gone—what an ass you are!’

‘I beg your pardon, George ; pray go on ; I’m very sorry.’

‘Well, I needn’t tell you there’s a louvre

in the roof to let the smoke out—and the rain in.

‘Just so ; I always admire that idea.’

‘Very quaint, isn’t it ? The roof timbers are all exposed, and they get a fine tone in time, magnificent !’

‘Very dark and picturesque.’

‘Yes.’

‘I can quite appreciate that.’

‘No you can’t, quite ; but never mind. Then we go in for lots of flitches of bacon, and hams, and shoulders of mutton, and kippered salmon, and red herrings, and so on—and especially salt cod—’

‘I see.’

‘Do you ? Pray don’t keep on interrupting me, there’s a good fellow. Well, we hang them up in the roof at any rate ; and then we have ropes of onions, and strings of black-puddings, and a variety of things, more out of the way—amazingly jolly ; and the cooking things hanging on the wall, you know ; and our clothes on massive oak pins driven into the joints of the stones at random—prodigiously quaint——’

‘I suppose you don’t stop up the plaster in

such cases, do you? I should think it much more——'

'There you are again. Plaster? what plaster?'

'On the walls, I meant.'

'Did you? And who told you there was to be any such modern rubbish at all?' says the architect, almost throwing his eyeglass over his shoulder.

'Naked stones, George?'

'Of course. It really is disgusting to see a fellow who was not exactly born in idiocy——'

'I beg your pardon, George, I do indeed.'

'Well; then I go in for an oratory—now this is something that I hope you can understand.'

'I hope so.'

'I won't have it large, because a poor architect is not supposed to be able to afford it, you know, Theo. Unless he's a monk, of course, and then he would be on a different footing; but I'm not going in for that, old fellow, as you are aware.' Georgius is re-fixing his glass once more.

'I see what you mean.'

‘No you don’t; you can’t; it’s impossible; what’s the use of deceiving yourself?’

‘I beg your pardon, George, I’m sure; what’s next?’

‘I mean to go in for something new as regards the oratory.’

‘I wouldn’t do that, George, I really would not; novelty is so very dangerous in theological matters.’

‘Now, don’t cry out before you’re hurt, old chap——’

‘I am bound to warn you, George; my sacred office, my vows—I’m on my own ground now.’

‘Bother your own ground! What I mean is——’

‘George, I must rebuke you; you forget yourself.’

‘Shut up, old chap, and hear what I’ve got to say.’

‘I won’t shut up, George; I will not shut up; my conscience—my duty as a priest—will not allow me to shut up.’

‘It’s only this, Theo, and I’m sure you’ll like it.’

‘If you are sure I shall approve of it——’

‘It ain’t anything more than this, old fellow—only you’re so wanting in common judgment——’

‘I rejoice to think I am, George.’

‘Well, you are, and I won’t dispute it. Just look here,’ says the architect, dropping his glass again.

‘Nothing heterodox, George?’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Nor latitudinarian?’

‘Not a bit of it.’

‘All Via-Median?’

‘Bother!’

‘Very well, George ; now I am all ears.’

‘It’s an old joke, old fellow, but I agree with you,’ says Georgius refixing his glass.

‘Never mind, what I’m going in for is this :—I put my little oratory—just room enough for one, with a niche at one side you know——’

‘Yes, I see.’

‘It’s not likely you do ; but never mind, old chap ; our back garden stands north and south as you know. Consequently my hall will catch the east wind admirably, and can’t so far be identified with anything modern, you know, in respect of comfort, can it?’

‘Dear me! I should never have thought of that.’

‘I dare say not.’

‘You’re very clever, George; I know that well.’

‘All right. That’s why the niche is at one side of the oratory; because the oratory is at the north end, and so the niche goes to the east; has a little east window in fact—with-  
out glass of course—so as to catch it full on.’

‘Very ingenious; very subtle; and in my poor judgment most appropriate and orthodox.’

‘Well, don’t be such an ass next time when I tell you I’m going in for something new. So much for the oratory. Then I have a cellar at the other end.’

‘Underneath the hall.’

‘Nonsense; all on the same level of course, just under the ground-line if anything—’

‘To make it damp; I see.’

‘No you don’t; you’re always so knowing.’  
(Dropping his glass.) ‘I can’t exactly say it’s to make it positively damp, you know, but it isn’t to make it dry. I want to get rid of

the idea of modern cossetting, you know, and drainage, and wood floors, and so on.'

'A stone floor, I suppose?'

'I'm not quite sure; I rather think clay, so as to go in for modesty, you know.'

'To be sure; and what do you keep in the cellar?'

'All sorts of things. Beer, cold meat, bread and butter, potatoes (if we don't give them up—because after all they're only modern), cabbages, parsnips, wood (we certainly won't use coals)——'

'Coke would be dangerous, George, or you would get rid of the smoke that way, you know, if you could use it.'

'Coke! If there's anything I hate——'

'I beg pardon, George; shall you have a bedroom for a fellow?'

'A bedroom for a fellow!' shrieks the architect. 'Not for a queen! I once thought of having either a kitchen or a solar——'

'What is a solar, George?'

'What is a solar! You don't mean to say really—what is a solar?'

'Yes, I'm sure I don't know.'

‘Then I should be ashamed to tell you, Theo. Not to know what a solar is!’ (Re-fixing his glass.)

‘I am very sorry ; but really, not being, I think, an ecclesiastical term, it is scarcely in my way.’

‘Well, never mind, the point is this. If I had a kitchen, then the hall would be in my opinion too much like a modern parlour ; and if I had a solar, you know, old fellow (which I may tell you is simply a loft), then that would look too much like a modern bedroom, don’t you see ? In either case the whole thing would be abortive.’

‘You don’t go in for beds, do you ?’

‘No, they’re later ; at least for people of modest rank, you know, they’re much later.’

‘I suppose one doesn’t catch cold in such a house, George ?’

‘I should say not, but I don’t consider that—it’s modern.’

‘It might be a little chilly occasionally.’

‘Well, not more than it ought to be, I think. I hate stuffiness.’

‘You could have the house warmed with hot water, I suppose, in the winter time.’

‘Could you?’ (The architect drops his eyeglass almost in agony.) ‘While you’re about it you could have the floor carpeted, you know, and the door grained and varnished, and the ceiling whitewashed, and a lot of such things if you happen to be a staring lunatic—as I sometimes think—’

‘Well, George, I really did not know; of course it is new to me.’

‘I know it is; you’re—in heart, you know—a disgustingly modern fellow, Theo.’

‘I’m sure I don’t mean it, George.’

‘Don’t mean it? Why don’t you ask whether we shall go in for knives and forks; or wear night-shirts at six for twenty shillings; or set up a dustbin; or have a pump; or perhaps have the water laid on, or the gas; or have the butcher calling for orders? Good gracious! You might as well go in for a tea-kettle; or a toasting-fork; or lucifer matches, or a cruet-stand; or for drinking your beer out of a tumbler!’

‘If I was as well up as you are, George, in all that kind of learning, I should be positively unhappy about everything.’

‘So I am; I’m disgusted with the world,

Theo, that's the fact ; and if it were not for architecture and art generally, I should——'

Georgius refixes his eyeglass solemnly.

'Don't be rash, George ; I won't allow it.'

'I didn't tell you I'm going in for fortifying the place, did I?'

'No ; I see what you mean.'

'But you don't do anything of the kind ; so don't suppose it. What I mean is this. At first I thought of taking a piece of ground in the suburbs——'

'I see ; and come up to town by the omnibus.'

'You're an omnibus ! I might ride a horse, of course ; or there's another animal, that you may know more about personally, which might be not much out of character with the old time ; or a mule might do—another thing that you seem to take after sometimes ; but I should walk all the way, of course, as befits my station ; I don't aspire to be a cardinal or an abbot, or anything of that kind, although you may.'

'I beg your pardon, George ; you know I am not up in such things.'

‘Then you ought to be ; and everybody ought to be. Can’t you read ?’ (Indignantly dropping his eyeglass.)

‘But I have other things to read, George. Pray go on and tell me about your house ; I really am delighted with it.’

‘Very well ; you’re not a bad sort, Theo, after all ; but the idea of introducing an omnibus ! I hope you’re really sorry.’

‘Well, I beg your pardon, most sincerely ; I know I’m very stupid.’

‘Yes, I must say you are rather, upon my word I must. But about the fortification. Having bought the land—about a quarter of an acre I should want at least—I should have had a moat dug before I went any farther—a magnificent moat !’

‘I see, George ; an exceedingly fine idea.’

‘No, you mustn’t suppose you understand it, really ; just wait a minute, there’s a good fellow. I should have dug the moat and thrown up the earth inside to form a bank, with a wall on the top, you know, all round the quarter of an acre.’ (Georgius raises his eyeglass and takes a view of the quarter of an acre in imagination.)

‘Yes,’ replies Theo, ‘I like that idea immensely.’

‘Very well ; then I should have gone in for an embattled gate in the wall next the road—I’m afraid I must say next the street ; with a drawbridge—of course on a small scale, because the whole thing would have to be modest. In the meantime I suppose I should have had to apply to the Lord Chancellor or some other humbug to get a license for cre-nellation.’

‘What is that ?’

‘You don’t mean to say——?’

‘I beg your pardon, indeed I do ; pray go on.’

‘That’s a license to fortify one’s house, you know ; because without that I should have had the district surveyor, or the inspector of nuisances, or the commissioner of police, or some other crass myrmidon of absurdity, interfering with me.’ (Dropping his glass contemptuously.)

‘I should think you would.’

‘To a certainty, old fellow. And then in case of a popular rising, you know, I should have been able to defend the place and hold

it for the Government—supposing I approved of their principles, you know.'

'Yes.'

'Which I'm afraid I shouldn't always do in these times.'

'Perhaps not. But how would you have managed about the moat? I suppose you would have had it full of water?'

'You do, do you? What would be the use of it empty?'

'That's what I was thinking, George; but the waterworks would charge no end of money to keep it filled.'

'The waterworks! What a chap you are! You might just as well say the people that make the sewers would want lots of money to empty it.' (Refixing his glass.)

'I fear they would, George; I do indeed.'

'Well, I hadn't thought out that part of the plan; of course one can't go in for everything at once, and a great deal would have depended upon the locality.'

'And how about the moat? I suppose you would have had a wall round it, or an iron railing.'

'An iron railing! an iron saucepan!'

‘ People would have fallen in.’

‘ Let ’em fall in ’ (dropping his glass with a sneer); ‘ the old people didn’t fall in ; except when they were driven in sometimes at the point of the halberd.’

‘ That reminds me, George ; people would have committed suicide in your moat ; I’m afraid you must have had a railing. And the cats, John, and puppy-dogs——’

‘ Cats and puppy-dogs ! I shan’t tell you any more ; I’m disgusted with you.’

‘ I am very sorry, George, but really the warmth of debate——’

‘ I’m permanently disgusted with you, Theo ; you’ve no more feeling for art than a churchwarden ! By-the-bye, I’ve been thinking it over, and I’ve got an idea that churchwardens will be put in a place by themselves in the lower regions.’

‘ Not a bad idea, George.’

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A VISIT TO MR. DODD.

MR. DODD of Alabasters answers a gentle tap at the door of his room.

The office of Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts and Dodd is conducted in a highly respectable old-fashioned manner. There is a special attendant in the entrance-hall of the house, whose duty it is to ascertain the nature of every one's business and show him to the one proper apartment amongst the many for the transaction of that business. He is a grey-haired gentleman, an old client who once kept his hounds in Wales, and who long ago came thankfully to this poor post as a refuge from destitution. It is he who taps so gently at the door of Mr. Dodd's room, and he is told to come in.

Mr. Dodd is placidly writing a letter, and

does not look up. The messenger lays a scrap of paper upon his desk, which he does not at once look at. After a few moments he has finished his letter, and then he placidly looks at the scrap of paper. There is writing upon it which is not easily deciphered.

‘What is this, Mr. Hughes? I do not quite make it out.’

‘The gentleman is a Mr. Oldhousen, an architect, sir.’

‘Oh yes, I see it now. Show him in, Mr. Hughes.’

It is not to be supposed that Master Georgius carries about him such a modern abomination as a card-case: he has therefore, at Mr. Hughes’s request, inscribed his name on this scrap of paper. If Mr. Dodd cannot read it, that is his own fault; but Mr. Hughes, being certainly not able to read it, has politely asked for an explanation, and has thus been able to help his employer. The handwriting is of a fine bold mediæval style; and the inscription is plain enough when explained—being only a picturesque or quaint memorandum, after the ancient manner, of the artist’s name and title, thus :

✠ Master Georgius Dl  
dhusen ye Arc  
hptecte ✠

As he looks at it in his placid way, Mr. Dodd cannot help admiring its quaintness, almost with a smile. Mr. Dodd has heard of the architect before, and of his great reputation, but he could not be expected to recognise his autograph all at once.

Mr. Georgius enters the room with apparent difficulty, having in fact stumbled over the doormat by reason of dropping his eyeglass; he now peers anxiously about him in quest of the occupant. Mr. Dodd advances therefore, and shakes hands with him.

‘Happy to have the honour, Mr. Oldhousen.’

‘How do you do?’ says the artist, ‘how are you?’ making a variety of abortive efforts to refix the glass in his eye.

‘May I ask you to take a chair?’

Georgius seats himself and hands a letter to Mr. Dodd. By that letter Sir Constantine Gay introduces, at the request of Mr. Julian Saint-Paul, his friend Mr. Oldhousen,

the very eminent architect, in the hope that Mr. Dodd may be able to consult him with reference to the carrying out of the building project at Sweetbriar Gardens.

Mr. Dodd is a gentleman who thinks rapidly, but he reads letters of introduction slowly. He glances at his visitor as he reads; and, as a man of business, he is scarcely satisfied, perhaps, with his appearance.

‘Sir Constantine Gay is—I am greatly obliged to Sir Constantine Gay for the honour,’ says Mr. Dodd—‘so eminent an artist.’

‘Well, you know,’ replies Georgius, ‘it’s a grand opportunity, and I think we ought to make a fine thing of it; don’t you?’

‘No doubt, sir.’

‘I’m going now to see the site, and then I can tell you more about it. Have you any idea how much money there is?’

‘Oh yes.’

‘How much?’

‘Yes; just so; quite so. But, as you say, the first thing is to see the site.’

‘Not that it makes much difference to me

what the site is, you know. I shall go in for severely muscular thirteenth—early I think—and Gregorian, you know.'

'Ah, Gregorian.'

'Yes, Gregorian, you know. I've taken to Gregorian in everything lately. I find it quite a science, you know.'

'Just so; do you indeed?'

'The music hasn't a chance in common churches.'

'I suppose not.'

'No; they ain't quaint enough in their construction, you know—the materials, I mean. Most fellows are satisfied with a picturesque set of drawings; any fool can do that.'

'I suppose so.'

'Yes; there's so much conceit in our profession.'

'So I have heard.'

'No, you haven't indeed—not to the extent I mean. Have you had any other fellow after it?'

'I beg your pardon.'

'Any other architect been here yet?'

'Oh yes, I have had the pleasure of seeing several gentlemen.'

‘The dickens you have! Who are they? It’s too bad, you know, isn’t it? A fellow never feels his connection to be safe. Now I’ve known Julian Saint-Paul intimately all my life.’

‘Ah; I have heard a great deal of him.’

‘We’re connected especially through—through the ladies, you know.’

‘Indeed? How very interesting!’

‘Poor fellow! pity he’s so ill; can’t make out what’s the matter; dined with him the night before he was attacked; didn’t see anything the matter with him then; at Viscount Malign’s.’

‘Dear me! at Viscount Malign’s.’

‘Yes; do you know Malign?’

‘Just so; dear me, what a pity! Known him all your life, you say.’

‘Yes: curious fellow, always was.’

‘I suppose so.’

‘Good fellow as ever could be; modern, but good.’

‘Modern; I suppose so.’

‘Very; hasn’t a thought for the old ways; the only fault he has. Looks to the future, you know; I look to the past.’

‘I suppose so.’

‘Yes ; a vast deal of repose about the past. Julian has no repose. Thinks the world is going in for improvement, you know ; I don’t. Believes that the men of the present day are—I scarcely know how to put it, you know ; but I regard them, you know, as jack-asses.’

‘Do you indeed ?’

‘Yes ; but Julian’s a splendid fellow.’

‘A very benevolent person, I am told.’

‘Thinks of nothing else ; doesn’t know one end of a church from the other.’

‘A strange person the soldier.’

‘I like him, you know ; I can’t say I don’t ; the rummest old fellow I ever saw, but good as gold.’

‘Quite of the old school.’

‘Well, you know, you don’t expect anything else.’

‘I suppose not.’

‘Talking of that, what a great deal the world owes to the old men.’

‘Yes ; they point the way to youth.’

‘I don’t mean that ; I don’t think they do in that sense ; I mean the men of the past,

you know, the artists of the old time, when art was everything.'

'I see.'

'Yes; no, you don't; but, at any rate, I believe everything they did was studied for effect.'

'Dear me!'

'Of course; I'm speaking to a man that can understand me, and I'll tell you what. I believe the old men, when they went to bed at night, lay on their backs with their hands clasped and their heads ricked on one side.'

'Do you indeed?'

'By Jove I do! And I believe it was quite a common thing to see a fellow go down on his knees in the street, like the monuments, you know, in the churches, with his two wives one on each side and his fifteen children behind, just for the artistic effect of the thing.'

'Do you indeed?'

'Yes, and I believe a good deal more than that. You've no idea what a lot of that sort of thing I believe.'

'Ah! *credo quia impossibile est*, Mr. Oldhousen.' (Mr. Dodd is evidently a little

broad in his views ; Mr. Georgius has not expected this, but he dare not resent it.) ' Yet belief, Mr. Oldhousen, is a mighty influence for good.'

' Ain't it ? I can't think how people can get on without it. For my part, you know, if I couldn't believe—really believe, you know—anything I take a fancy to, I should be miserable.'

' I suppose you would.'

' Perfectly miserable. Well, good-morning ; I'm off to see the site, you know, and then I can tell you more about it. But I've quite made up my mind to make it Gregorian.'

' Ah !' says Mr. Dodd as he rises to shake hands, ' very interesting.'

' Well, you know,' says Master Georgius, as if loath to quit the subject, or anxious to leave the most favourable impression upon the mind of the lawyer, ' I call Gregorianism the very essence of ecclesiastical art. Just look here ; your people are quite as much to blame as we are ; and that, you know, is not always the case, is it ?'

' Just so ; very remarkable, sir, very.'

‘ They spoilt the real old Gregorian music, you know, with those beastly bars, don’t you see ?’

‘ Did they indeed ?’

‘ Made it all modern, you know ; the up-shot is perfectly disastrous ; changed the accent, the metre, and everything else ; took a thing that was trochaic, made it iambic, and I can’t tell you what.’

‘ Dear me !’

‘ Positively ; threw all the old traditions to the winds ; found plain chants perfectly divine, left a parcel of mere tunes only fit for barrel-organs.’

‘ More musical, I suppose.’

‘ More musical ! If there’s anything I hate— Look here— Any blockhead can write a novel, can’t he ?’

‘ Well, sir, perhaps——’

‘ And any other blockhead can write what you call a tune——’

‘ I see.’

‘ No you don’t, really. But a blockhead can’t write a plain chant, can he ?’

‘ I suppose not.’

‘ No ; and that reminds me ; any block-

head can design a common church, but he can't make it Gregorian ; he can make a tune of it, but he can't make it a plain chant, you know.'

'Just so, sir ; good-morning, sir ; proud to have had the honour ; quite a Gregory yourself, sir——'

'All right ; the fact is the common fellows in our profession are not artists at all.'

'I suppose not.'

'Not one of them ; I can't get them to understand half what I say.'

'Dear me ! how very sad ; good-morning, Mr. Oldhousen ; good-morning.'

Mr. Georgius is politely bowed out of the room by Mr. Dodd ; and out of the house no less politely by poor Mr. Hughes ; and, if the truth must be told, he is so overjoyed with the urbanity and intelligence of the eminent lawyer, that he is half in the mind to flop down on the pavement, after the ancient manner, for the sake of effect, and unmistakably raises one hand and sets his neck awry like the rubbing of a brass, to the amusement of not a few scoffers who pass him on his way to Sweetbriar Gardens.

‘A remarkably intellectual fellow,’ muses Master Georgius ; ‘remarkably nice fellow ; good friend to have ; capital connection ; rather modern, but he can’t very well help that ; would if he could, I dare say. I think he understands me pretty well. Won’t I make a church of it, that’s all !’

Mr. Georgius has scarcely left Mr. Dodd’s room, when the eminent lawyer, reseating himself blandly at his table, yawns.

‘Now,’ says Mr. Dodd, ‘what’s the next matter ? Oh yes.’

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## BY THE SEA.

SUMMER has come, and Julian Saint-Paul is still recovering but slowly—very slowly indeed. He is lodging at a farmhouse on the south coast. He prefers to be solitary, and has forsaken the comforts of the seaside town a few miles off because of the irksomeness of its bustle. His friends, and even his doctor, express their doubts whether he will ever be the man he was. And it is still impossible to understand what is the matter with him; it is the most inexplicable case, says the doctor, that he has met with in his experience.

The young man likes to walk alone on the beach. When the sea is calm he will sit on the sand and throw pebbles into the water listlessly, wondering what will become of

them when the tide carries them away. At another time, if the waves should happen to be careering up the shore in their fretful fume, he will stand and gaze for an hour upon their urgency, thinking—how futile it all is! When the wind is high, and the vexed green water lashed into white foam and spray, he will smile to think how soon it will be over. If the sun is shining brightly, and the soft breath of the sea-air fluttering lazily along the sand, he will weep and wish he were at rest. If the clouds are heavy, and the day dreary and sad, his spirits will bound up to the challenge, and he will long to be at work again, battling with sin and sorrow!

Never a word to any one of what is on his mind. How can he speak of such a thing! For he is haunted by two bright angels—one bright and good, one bright and bad. Always together; now clearly seen in the night or in the day, in the dream or in the waking vision, in the chamber or in the air, in the sunshine or in the mist; now dim, or very dim; but always together. They are not of mortal shape; and yet they are; and always together!

‘I wonder if I am mad!’

One of the bright angels regards him mockingly, but with a bewitching smile. The other, pale and sorrowful, fixes upon him her sweet young eyes in solemn sadness.

‘Can I be mad? But the other day I was strong and earnest; burning with a grand desire; resolute to attack or to defend; proud of a purpose; full of hope; resting upon the very arm of God. Can I be mad? To-day I tremble with weakness; I am borne down by a great fear; my very heart is chilled; the Angel of Death has overshadowed me with his black wing.’

‘Dear love! why so sorrowful? Why such melancholy in those sweet young eyes? Come to me; rescue me; lift me up; console me; guide me; save me from this unspeakable despair!’

‘O fair vision! Fair and false; fair and false! Pity me; have mercy on my soul; break that bewitching smile; frown, for the sake of pity, that I may forget that smile; strike me with thy clenched hand, that I may flee and escape!’

Always together!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DREAM OF LOVE AND LOVE.

HE dreams one night. He is in the Sanctuary of Viscount Malign. His Excellency is writing busily at a table; amongst his many affairs, something seems to be, if not disturbing, urgent. His face is stern. His Excellency has to attend to many affairs, and no doubt some of them from time to time must be thus urgent. From out of their niches in the outer chamber, as silent as the grave and as solemn, the men of mark and metal glare upon his Excellency as he writes, like cruel beasts. From the four corners of the apartment the four fair marble ladies who simulate the four fair Seasons—sweet summer and luscious autumn, crisp winter and bright spring—are gazing wistfully towards the spot where the great Ambassador is so busy with

his inscrutable task. Under the globe in the centre, the pair of pretty ones who tell of Love the real and the ideal appear to hold their breath as they look upon the master. In the dark alcoves the withered flowers lie in their beauty dead. Before them the mysterious priests of long-forgotten faiths hold up the sacrificial fountains, out of which the crimson spray springs upward from between the serpents' fangs, shedding around its luscious scent of incense. Up in the vault, the long arrays of shadowy men and women, issuing from the clouds of the impenetrable past and seeking the clouds of the impenetrable future, gaze every one of them in awe upon the silent figure at the table. Down in the depth, the dreamland of the dead lies dim and cold beneath the ice of imperturbable fate. The Viscount Malign at length smiles as he writes; perhaps he is satisfied with his policy.

The dreamer waits long; his Excellency has still much to write; and still he smiles. As he smiles, the night-air shivers.

From behind one of the altars creeps Lais, silent, lithe, and beautiful. Without a foot-

fall she steals across the ice ; approaches the master's chair ; looks up in his face ; leaps upon his table ; displaces indeed some of his papers.

‘Ah ! beauty ; have a care ; thy velvet feet may mar the subtle destiny of some friend—or foe—and in either case thou mayest be sorry.’

His Excellency looks up. ‘A visitor, sweet Lais. It is our love-sick youth. Welcome, young man. How does the breath of this rude world still rub against a lover's cheek ?’

‘Viscount Malign, what poison did I drink at your table ?’

‘Poison ? why poison ?’

‘Before that treacherous night, what was I, Viscount Malign ? And what am I now ?’

‘Pshaw ! be a man.’

‘Indeed I would, but cannot. I am a child.’

‘Childhood is at least happy.’

‘Not such as mine ; not such as mine.’

‘What is amiss ?’

‘Amiss ? Look, Viscount, they are there ! Always together ; in sun and in cloud, in day

and in darkness; always together! Look, there they stand!

‘And two fair pictures surely.’

‘Dear love! why so sad? Why such sorrow in the sweet young eyes? Come to me; console me!’

She comes. He takes her soft hand tenderly; raises it to his lips. How cold its touch!

*She* also approaches—the other. Always together! Such things occur in dreams—she gently draws him away. The cold hand falls. Her hand is not cold. Her jewelled arm embraces him. Her perfumed hair shades his eyes so that he does not see. Warm lips touch his—he is in paradise!

Lais leaps at his throat! The men of mark and mettle shout in laughter. The fair ladies titter, and hide their pretty faces with their hands. The faded flowers fall all to dust. The red spray streams into the air. The incense chokes him!

The Ambassador sits there, calm and undisturbed.

Lais has tasted blood; she bounds away convulsively, shakes it from off her fangs,

hisses it from off her tongue, as if it were  
poisonous blood—the blood of a traitor.

He awakes ; trembles ; prays to God.

Alas ! his prayer is never answered now.

## CHAPTER XX.

## PAIRING.

THE Emeritus Professor is not exactly a ladies' man, and he is greatly at a loss to imagine what is amiss with his young niece.

He has a general impression that people pair; and he understands in the same vague way that his friend Julian Saint-Paul and his niece Madonna have been undergoing the preliminaries of the pairing process. He has no doubt that this is precisely as it ought to be; and, believing that it is the right thing to do to shut one's eyes in such circumstances, he has made a point of taking no notice of their proceedings. He has no reason to question the fact—which is constantly cropping up in various indirect ways in his books—that men and women have done pretty much the same kind of thing in past times.

He has also recently been informed that his friend Trigonometer of the Museum and his niece's schoolfellow Miss Mariana Oldhosen are proposing to pair ; and the high character of Trigonometer as an advanced archæologist and that of Mariana as the daughter of his old friend form a guarantee for the scientific as well as artistic propriety of the measure. Thus far the Professor is satisfied.

He also knows, alas ! that his friend Julian Saint-Paul has been seriously indisposed, and is not thought to be even yet recovering his health in the way that could be wished. He is extremely grieved. That his niece should share his sorrow for their friend he considers to be quite natural. He has a suspicion, moreover, that the preliminaries of pairing may be supposed to involve a young woman in such a case in special emotions of her own. But, farther than this, science fails to explain the phenomena of Madonna's behaviour, and Professor Gay resolves that it is his duty as her guardian to institute experiments for the discovery of truth.

‘My dear child,’ says the Professor, ‘you seem to me to be in some distress.’

‘I am not very well, dear uncle, thank you.’

They are at breakfast. The Professor regards the subject of experiment with fixed attention, as he might regard such a thing as his egg with fixed attention if he were to find a lively chicken in it.

‘What are the leading symptoms, my dear, of your disorder?’

‘Nothing particular, dear uncle, thank you.’

‘A general disturbance of the organisation?’

‘Oh no, dear uncle; I am a little out of health.’ Here Madonna is obliged to put her handkerchief to her eyes.

‘Emotionally, my love; I see. Have you consulted Mr. Blackdraught?’

‘Oh no, uncle dear; I shall soon be well; I am only a little nervous.’

‘Nervous disturbance, evidently. But let me tell you, dear child, that the nervous system, regarded mechanically, is a highly scientific structure, and requires to be treated — I mean mechanically — in an extremely scientific way.’

‘I’m afraid your egg is not well done, dear uncle.’

‘Let me see. No, my love, I fail to discover any fault of that sort. I wonder how our friend Julian is this morning. What a dear young man he is!’

The accidental turn of phrase is too much for poor Madonna, and she sobs aloud.

‘Bless me!’ cries the Professor, ‘what a feeling heart you have, my dear! You are exactly like your mother. That would be only natural, however; indeed how could it be otherwise when you reflect for a moment? There is no natural product but is the precise effect of efficient cause. Two and two make two twos, and the twos are exactly the same; how could they be otherwise—don’t you see?’

‘I am very unhappy, dear uncle, and I have no friend to go to but you.’

‘God bless me! let me feel your pulse, child.’

‘It is not my pulse, uncle dear, it is my heart; my heart is broken.’

The Emeritus Professor is a thoroughly scientific man.

‘This,’ he says to himself, ‘is a severe symptom. I see. The treatment is—fondling.’ He rises from table; places a chair beside that of his niece; seats himself carefully so as to be prepared for contingencies. ‘Come to me, my poor darling,’ says the Professor, with the tenderness of a woman.

Madonna hides her face in his bosom and weeps passionately.

‘I know,’ she says, ‘I am not good enough for him; I never thought I was.’

‘My dear child, why not, in the name of wonder?’

‘But I have fixed my heart upon him. I know it is wrong.’

‘Wrong, my love, how can it be wrong? Just consider, what a noble youth he is.’

‘Oh yes; I never thought myself, indeed I did not, to be his equal. It is best as it is; but my heart is broken.’

The old gentleman pats the beautiful young head, parts the flowing hair from off the sweet sad eyes, and kisses them, as his own fill with tears.

‘There, dearest little girl!’ he says, ‘be

comforted, be comforted. You have no mother, dear child, and I am but a foolish old man.'

All this has taken some time and Mariana Oldhosen is coming this morning directly after breakfast—being herself a very early bird—to have such a long talk over all that has happened during six weeks that she has been away on a visit. In fact Mariana's voice, which is not a soft one, is heard in the hall asking if breakfast is over.

'Bless me!' exclaims Professor Gay, 'there is Miss Mariana coming; don't cry any more, my dearest, or Miss Mariana will be inquiring what is the matter. Now let me finish my egg; and don't wait for me, you know, if you have done, but run away to Miss Mariana and she will fondle you so much better than I can.'

Madonna must not keep dear Mariana waiting, she says; so she hastily swallows a little tea and runs upstairs—to make herself presentable, in fact, in the eyes of a better judge of matters feminine than the learned Professor, with all his clumsy kindness of heart, can be supposed to be.

‘Dear, dear!’ says the Professor, ‘what can be the meaning of all this? Feverish—I know by her forehead; exceedingly nervous; the whole organisation quite out of gear; a most sensitive creature at the best; animal organisation, as a rule, is always disturbed by pairing; poor Julian being so ill, the little girl—I have no doubt it could be traced to electrical action; a singular phenomenon altogether, very singular.’

This being settled, the good antiquary thinks no more of the matter, but makes a hearty breakfast and goes off to his study.

## CHAPTER XXI.

MARIANA.

‘WHY, dear!’ exclaims Miss Mariana in her prompt emphatic tones as her friend enters the morning-room, ‘how poorly you look!’

‘Do you think so?’

‘You’ve been crying, dear. I know you’ve been crying. It’s housekeeping, I’m sure. I hate housekeeping.’

‘It is a trouble, dear, sometimes, is it not?’

‘Always. And how do you think I am looking after being away so long at the north pole?’

‘Not at the north pole, Mariana?’

‘Next door to that comfortable region, I assure you, dear. I hate the place.’

‘Do you?’

‘Mortally. Always rains—always      The

sun permanently established on the other side of the world. Our Georgius believes that the earth is as flat as a pancake ; then I say, directly you cross the border, you're quite on the under side of the pancake.'

'How disagreeable !'

'Disastrous in every way. People disgraceful. Talk like—like lower animals. Never should understand one word if I were there—Goodness forbid!—for a thousand years.'

'How very——'

'Of ecclesiastical needlework, dear, not a vestige ! Ladies of title knit stockings half an inch thick before your very eyes at a morning call !'

'Really !'

'People always drinking—vitriol I believe it is ; and when diluted for form's sake, they use water as nearly red hot, dear, as water can be !'

'How shocking !'

'All red haired. And dreadfully freckled. Not what you would call freckles, but things like half-pence, dear.'

'How strange they must look !'

‘And eating oats, dear ; and what *do* you think is their great national delicacy ?’

‘I cannot imagine.’

‘The entire inside of a sheep boiled in a bag !’

‘Really !’

‘Yes, dear. And when you have eaten one of those things, and drunk about a pailful of vitriol, I leave you to think what a condition you are in !’

‘My dear Mariana, you must be joking.’

‘Joking ! And sermons—I’m sure—I was going to say a fortnight long, but at the very shortest lasting from breakfast till dinner !’

‘Really !’

‘Our Georgius says they are irremediably modern, having lost all ecclesiastical traditions ; but I differ with him ; it seems to me they must be so ancient as to be quite beyond the reach of research. And they think so themselves. And I don’t differ from them. There ! if at any moment I had been seized by half a dozen of them dressed in petticoats ; and sacrificed to idols on the very top of one of their dreadful mountains ; with stone knives ; on a block of granite weighing a

hundred and fifty tons ; I really should not, dear, have experienced one moment's astonishment !

‘ Really ?’

‘ And how have you been, dear ?’

‘ Not very well.’

‘ Somebody is still very ill, I hear.’

‘ Very ill, Mariana, very ill.’

‘ Our Georgius told me so last night when he met me at the railway. I hate railways, and so does Georgius.’

‘ He is staying at the seaside.’

‘ And doesn't get well ?’

‘ They say not.’

‘ I hate the seaside.’

‘ Do you think so ?’

‘ Decidedly. And our Georgius is going to build the cathedral in that dreadful place where he works. I'm afraid that is what has made him ill—ruined his constitution, dear. Constantly inhaling the concentrated essences of all sorts of filthy people ; how could it be otherwise ?’

‘ I sometimes think it may be so, dear ; but he is so good and self-denying.’

‘ Georgius is going in for building it in

the style of the dear Gregorian chants, dear. He says we shall now, at last, know what a Gregorian chant really is. Do you like Gregorian ?

‘ I think it is a dreary kind of music, dear ; don’t you ?’

‘ Our Georgius says it is not done picturesquely enough ; and I don’t differ with him. It ought, he says, by rights to set one’s hair on end.’

‘ Really ?’

‘ Yes, dear ; and he is going in for making his cathedral do that, in order to suit the music and give it emphasis. Don’t you think it’s a nice idea ?’

‘ Of course he knows best, dear, but it’s so new to me.’

‘ He says all the figures in the real old paintings have their hair on end, and that is the cause of it.’

‘ Really—the music ?’

‘ Yes, dear.’

‘ I never heard of that before.’

‘ Nor I. And he says that is what made them so thin and their eyes so staring. And I don’t differ with him.’

‘Really?’

‘Yes, dear. And I suppose you keep up a constant correspondence, you two dears?’

‘Well, he is so very poorly.’

‘Never writes you at all?’

‘He is so ill, dear.’

‘Mr. Trigonometer writes me regularly when I’m away. Such nice letters. Full of information. Where he gets it all I can’t imagine. And *so* difficult to read.’

‘He is so clever, dear.’

‘Awfully, dear, I am sometimes appalled.’

‘Really?’

‘Appalled; petrified; more than petrified.’

‘Really?’

‘Not shop, you know, dear. Oh no! Nothing modern; mostly thirteenth, twelfth, eleventh, and so on, but sometimes fourth and fifth; often sixth and early seventh, Mr. Trigonometer goes in for very much the same as Georgius.’

‘So I’ve heard.’

‘Yes, dear; and I don’t differ from him. Don’t you think, dear, that if there’s anything

in this world more hateful than the rest, it's the nineteenth century ?'

'Well, dear, I'm not clever enough, you know, to give an opinion.'

'No, I know that, dear ; but it isn't opinion, it is—what shall I call it ?'

'I'm afraid I can't help you, dear.'

'Sympathy, that's the word. One's feelings. The inner sense, you know, and all that. And don't he write you at all ?'

'He has been so very poorly.'

'Poor dear ! that's what makes your eyes so red ; and your nose ; you look shocking.'

Madonna has been bearing up all this time bravely enough, chiefly by the help of meaningless replies to the brusque and muscular conversation of her friend ; but something gathers in her eyes in spite of all her fortitude, and rolls down one cheek visibly.

'Poor dear !' says Mariana—who is a woman after all—'I do believe you're fretting after him.'

'A little, dear,' answers Madonna ; for Mariana, with all her brusqueness, is a woman after all ; 'I cannot deny that I fret a little.'

‘A good deal, my poor darling ; I see you do.’

‘I am such a useless creature, Mariana, in such extremity.’

‘Well, dear, what could any one do ? What could I do ?’

‘I don’t seem to bear up as I ought. I am afraid he has made a mistake.’

‘Made a mistake ? What, forsaken you ?’

‘I mean he has made a mistake in choosing one so weak and silly. He is such a noble man !’

‘But that’s how it is done, dear ; indeed it is ; I have seen it many a time. The strong man admires the weak woman ; and the tall woman the short man. Look at me and Mr. Trigonometer ! Just think how I admire him ! If I wanted a man twice my own size, Goodness ! he would have to be ten or eleven feet high. Mr. Trigonometer is only five feet four and three-quarters in high heels.’

‘But you don’t know, Mariana, how I love Julian.’

‘Don’t I ? why shouldn’t I ?’

‘He is so grand, and I am so very—very—I can’t help saying insignificant. I never

thought myself his equal ; I am sure I never did.'

'Well, dear, I don't know ; but at any rate, if he thinks you are, what more do you want ?'

'I could not have expected it to be permanent, if I had only reflected.'

'Permanent ? He hasn't taken up with anybody else ?'

'No, dear ; I don't say that. If he did, I should just die. But he never asks for me now ; never writes me ; never sends me a word of a message.'

'Don't cry about it, darling ; or you'll make me cry, and then somebody's sure to come into the room.'

'I can't help it ; I wish I could. I feel so dreadfully solitary ; so forsaken ; so helpless. I don't know what to do.'

'Poor dear girl ! Can I do anything ? Can Georgius or Mr. Trigonometer do anything ? I'm sure they would, you know. Let us look at it in a practical way, dear, do.'

'I can't, Mariana ; I don't know how to do it. I only want to be in my grave !'

'Nonsense, dearest. I'll have a talk with

Georgius about it. He's awfully clever, you know. Of course, dear, if poor Julian is so very ill, how could you expect —— ?'

'If he were to send me a single word of a message by my cousin Constantine, who is always with him——'

'But, dear, Sir Constantine is really so very——' (Mariana is going to say modern, but hesitates)—'so unsympathetic, you know, —perhaps he doesn't think of asking for a message.'

'I would not let him ask for it.'

'Oh! but I would make him ask for it. The poor fellow forgets——'

'I am afraid he does.'

'You must let me talk it over with Georgius, dear.'

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE FOUNDATION-STONE.

THE ground at Marrabone's is being rapidly cleared for its new purpose. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts and Dodd have undertaken the direction of the proceedings.

Sir Constantine Gay—as the reader will be delighted to hear—has persuaded Mr. Dodd to place the building affairs in the hands of Master Georgius Oldhousen. That enthusiastic artist is more enthusiastic than ever. The design of the new church has been developed. This has been done on a great many sheets of Whatman's best double elephant paper, in highly muscular drawings; highly coloured for the distinguishment of stone from brick, oak from fir, and even brickwork in cement from brickwork in mortar. Elaborated tile-paving is painted on

the floors. Figures of the heavenly host are delineated on the walls. The sacrarium is a perfect mob of saints and angels. The mimic altar is adorned, not only with the very drapery of the cloth, but with the precise folds in which it is to be arranged. The reredos is a blaze of splendour impossible to be described. The very candelabra and other ornamental furniture are shown in Indian yellow to signify fine gold. And there are priests, monks, acolytes, and pages represented here and there as occasion requires, holding up ten-foot rods to give everything its proper scale. Nor are inscriptions wanting. Edifying texts by way of running ornament occupy every architectural band and frieze. Monograms are planted like a crop of sacred riddles on every boss and bracket. And where the paper is not covered by drawing, it is covered by descriptive particulars, memoranda, and observations, obscure because illegible, but manifestly as prodigiously adventurous as the rest. The *ensemble* is quaint beyond expression ; and it may certainly be owned, if the author wishes it, that the ordinary beholder can scarcely

help having every hair on his body set permanently on end. Mr. Dodd, who is not without artistic understanding, and whose religious sympathies are indeed not a little aroused, is found to be generally apt to look at these marvellous sheets of art with one side at the top. Sir Constantine Gay, who, as an English gentleman, is more willing than able to comprehend their meaning, invariably prefers to turn them upside down. As for honest Sergeant Jollybuff, who, in the absence of his co-trustee, is called upon by the lawyer to examine and approve the plans in his presence, he performs this duty through his horn spectacles with such conscientious attention, that he looks at the back of every one of them with the utmost anxiety ; perhaps it is for fear that anything material should escape his intelligent criticism—or in the hope that something may be discovered to furnish a clue to the universal mystery.

Monsignore Saint-Paul, now endowed with the titular office of a Chaplain of the Palace with its prelatie rank, and who still muses on many things as he walks at odd times in the gardens of the Vatican, has heard of the

remarkable bequest of old Mr. Marrabone. Monsignore is now returning home, and it has been decided by Alabasters that the right reverend father shall be requested to lay the foundation-stone of the new church of All Saints and Angels at Sweetbriar Gardens. Monsignore has accepted the honour.

The day at length arrives, and my lord the Chaplain of the Palace is punctual. My lord is all smiles and benedictions. Alabasters are in attendance, in the person of Mr. Dodd and his clerk. The architect is in attendance, in the person of Master Georgius. Other official persons are in attendance, including the silversmith who has supplied the trowel, and the eminent contractor who has with his own hands patted up the little hod of mortar. The trustees of the enterprise are present, in the person of the Sergeant Jollybuff; who, like my lord, is all smiles and benedictions in his degree. The reporters of the newspapers are present. Ladies and gentlemen are present as spectators of the interesting ceremony. Amongst the ladies one is conspicuous, the Countess Titania. This charming creature smiles so sweetly, and is so sweetly

scented, that the trustee in attendance, who is in the highest feather by reason of her assiduous attentions to him personally, has so far forgot himself and the gravity of the occasion as to declare to her, laughing heartily, that she has come into the Gardens like a bottle of sunshine preserved in lavender-water. To which infatuated observation the charming creature has graciously replied ; that, now she has found out the Gardens, and made the acquaintance of the Sergeant, she means to be frequent in her visits. Moreover, the charming creature makes inquiry of him as to the health of his co-trustee, dear young man ! who is an acquaintance of hers. And, on being informed that he is mending but slowly, she desires that he may be told, poor fellow ! that she has been asking for him. Which the Sergeant promises shall be done ; and, in his opinion, he adds, it will cheer the doctor up a bit, that will.

In fulfilment of his promise, the Sergeant indites a letter to his co-trustee.

‘ DEAR DOCTER,—This leaves me hoping to find you as well as i am myself and witch we

hav been having of the foundnation ston lade  
at the gardins and grand dowings by a  
grand lord clerjeman who you now i beleve  
as likeways is name is the same as your  
one and a ladey come witch nowed you  
docter and was verry butifull and a plesant  
smile on her fase and was calld a ckowntss  
such a grand ladey and wishes to be remem-  
bred to you docter and witch i sade I wood doo  
it and you must chere up docter or we never  
can get you now who out of the gardins

‘and remanes your humbel sarvent.

‘And such a funy litel gentelman is bild-  
ing the church but makes butifull drorings and  
all the santes and anjells like a rigmant of  
trups so butifull.’

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## SIR CONSTANTINE'S LETTER.

JULIAN SAINT-PAUL at the farmhouse by the sea-shore receives this noontime two letters. One is the epistle of the Sergeant, the other runs as follows :

‘ MY DEAR JULIAN,

‘ How do you get on, my dear boy ?

I have just come from the foundation-stone affair over the water. It went off admirably. Monsignore is improved vastly in every way by his sojourn at Rome, and I suppose I must say by his accession of honours. They say he is sure to get the hat before long. He already takes rank as a bishop, without a bishopric even *in partibus*. Your friend the architect was in great condition ; contradicted my lord flatly on several points of ecclesi-

ology, and made him wink his eyes at the plans as if he could not believe them. I must say Oldhousen is developing into something perfectly amazing. He is great just now upon Gregorian chants; they are the latest fad. He tells us this church is to be a symphony in unison, after the Gregorian style; but I cannot say that I understand him. You have not seen his drawings; they are simply awful. But I have no doubt they are the right thing; all these great artists are very odd. We have made up our minds to build only the choir at present, with some lodgings for the clergy attached, so as to make some degree of a show within a short time. Dodd takes a great interest in the affair and is our guide, philosopher, and friend in every way. Of course he understands the ritual and I do not. I thought Oldhousen might be deficient in this respect, being a Protestant; but I am agreeably surprised to hear from Dodd that I am quite wrong, and that he is in fact much farther advanced than people of their own Church, which is of course satisfactory, as we only want to please them, not ourselves. So, as Dodd thinks it best to push

on part of the edifice with all possible haste, I am in hopes we shall be able to hand over this chancel or whatever they prefer to call it within about a year. The plan includes a whole army of figures, but those must wait. Monsignore agrees with Dodd that they must take what they can get as soon as possible, and as plain as you like for the present. He made a little joke about it, saying that the saints would prefer coming in after the place was aired. He seems to be an extremely agreeable fellow, and, knowing I was your friend, spoke so very kindly of you. I cannot help thinking, between ourselves, that your dear good father is a little too hard upon him. Your father has had another row with the Earl. It is something about a man taking some turnips this time, four turnips I think, and his Lordship wants him sent to prison. The man's wife went to the parson, and carried a letter from his reverence to his Lordship. We can understand what was in the letter, but my lord was furious and put the woman out of the room with his own hand, which of course made matters worse ; because the woman went to the nearest squire and

applied for a summons. I do not know how it will end, but I learn that your father has decidedly the best of it for the time. However, I wish this kind of thing would distract his attention from our Romish coadjutor, because we shall very probably have a good deal to do with him for several years to come. The Professor was quite in the mind to attend our little ceremonial, but Madonna was taken ill that morning. Poor Madonna does not seem at all well. She is the best little girl going; there is no harm in a cousin saying that.

‘Always yours, my dear Julian.’

‘And wishes to be remembered to you docter and witch i sade i wood doo it.’

. Always together!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## STILL BY THE SEA.

HE walks daily by the sea-shore ; takes long walks, when the tide is out, along the wet sand ; musing, musing, musing ; talking to himself incessantly ; his eyes fixed upon the ground, or upon the water, or upon the sky.

‘Always together ! How long will this last ? How long till mania shall supervene upon this never-ceasing unrest ? O my love, my love ! And she is ill. And *she*—she wishes to be remembered to me. Oh that I had never seen her ! Which ? Ay, which indeed ?’

‘Which ! Have I not enough to do in this accursed world without perplexities like these ? Brimful, running over, with the incessant stream of tears ! All overwhelmed in the

chill clouds of great perpetual sin! Darkness that may be felt, for ever brooding over land and sea! Woe—woe—woe, ever-present, ever to come! Have I not enough to do to take my part in conquering all this? Why should I paralyse my arm with fondling a woman? Why should I turn back from my task because her face is fair? Why should I forsake my God because of the smile of a syren?

‘A syren? Singing to the shipwrecked sailor when these treacherous waves are playing in the sun. Enticing him, poor weary man! with sparkling eyes, with teeth of pearl, and lips of tender coral—stretching forth soft arms to woo him to the sweet embrace—ah yes!—the sweet embrace of—Death!

‘Why should I not die? When the snow and ice are on the ground and it is cold and cold and cold, is it not warm below? When the oppressive sun torments with blistering heat, where is a cool retreat but in the ground? The wicked cease from troubling; the weary are at rest.

‘Why speak of weariness! Am I not

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young, earnest, strong? With all that I have to do, shall I succumb like a spent old man or a squeamish woman? Let me shake off this drowsiness, this indolence, this fear! Shame upon me! I am only a coward after all.'

## CHAPTER XXV.

## MY LOVE SHE IS BEAUTIFUL.

HE is walking on the edge of a cliff. The path skirts a farmer's field of roots. A young labouring man is hoeing the crop; a sturdy healthy big fellow; the work is slow, and, for so strong a man, scarcely worthy of his strength. But it is done with a whistle and a song, now the tune only as if the words were forgotten, and now the words when they are remembered. And the song has a refrain; in truth the rest of it is mostly supplied by the whistle, but the refrain comes again and again with fluency never failing, although he is a man slow of speech and slow of song:

*“Whistle—whistle—whistle—whis-tle; and whistle—whistle  
whistle—whew;*

*Oh my love she is beewutifull, and she live by thee sea!”*

mornin', sir.'

‘Good-morning, friend,’ says Julian moodily.  
‘Hard at work?’

‘Yes, sir. Work when you’ve got work to do, I say :—

“ *Whistle—whistle—whistle—whis-tle—*” :

‘You seem to enjoy it.’

‘There’s a deal to enjoy about it, arn’t there?’

‘Well, when you see your work prospering under your hand, you may enjoy it whatever it is.’

‘Ah! it’s all very well.

“ *Oh my love she is beeowtifull—*”

It’s all very well for you to talk.’

‘You can sing at your work; and that is something.’

‘What’s the use else? Better sing than swear.’

‘No doubt.’ Julian speaks almost dreamily.

‘Do you work like this all the year round?’

‘Not always hoein’, you know; other things as well;—

“ *And redder than roses is my love too me;  
Oh my love she is beeowtifull—*”

Not always a-hoein’, I say, not always.’

‘Ploughing, reaping, of course, and so on?’  
Still dreamily.

‘Cartin’; spreadin’; sowin’; rollin’; har-  
rarin’; brakin’; mowin’; pullin’; cartin’ and  
spreadin’—did I say cartin’ and spreadin’  
afore?’

‘I think you did. And satisfied to pass  
your life thus’—still dreamily—‘in the same  
round of occupation year after year?’

‘What else would I do?’

*“And whiterer than lillyes is my love too me—”*

I don’t see no use in not being satisfied.’

‘But you would like to improve your con-  
dition surely?’ This is a strange fellow, and  
Julian becomes interested in his vagaries in  
spite of himself.

‘Not by no means, sir. I’m as God  
made me, and I don’t make no more about it.’

‘Why not? Would you not prefer to  
be——’ Why should the man prefer to  
be——?

‘To be a genelman—no; nor a parson—  
no; nor a farmer—no; nor yet to keep a  
shop—no I wouldn’t.’

*“Whistle—whistle—whistle—whis-tle; as she says too me;  
Oh my love she is beeowtifull, and she live by thee sea.”*

‘There is many a gentleman might envy you, friend, your light heart.’

‘Lor’! do you think so? It’s light because there’s nought in it.

“*Oh my love she is beewtifull—*”

—a heavy heart’s a heavy load for two pair o’ horses, I say.’

‘I wish my heart were as light as yours, friend.’

‘P’r’aps you’d like to have a try at my work?’

“*Whistle—whistle—whistle—whis-tle; as I says too she;—*”

‘I am afraid I should not keep pace with you.’

‘What mought be your own work, sir, when you’re at home?’

‘I am a doctor.’ Dreamily again.

‘Ah! plenty to do at that; no need to stand idle at doctorin’, I say.

“*And sweeter than honeycombs is her words too me—*”

‘I have been unwell myself, and that is why I am here.’

‘Worked a bit overhard, p’r’aps?’

“*Oh my love she is—*”

‘No. I am not over-worked.’

‘What then? But it arn’t allays hard work as kills; p’r’aps you fidgets.’

‘No, I think not—not generally.’

‘P’r’aps you’re took in love.

“*And yallerer than marygolds is my love too me—*”

‘It’s only a song, you know, sir, that I’ve got into my head.’

‘Only a song.’—How much there may be in a song!

‘Nothing more; nor less; it lightens the work, you see.’

‘No doubt it does.’

‘Not but what a man may have his sweet-art and him hoein’ of mangle, I hope?’

“*And sweeter than honeycombs is my words too she—  
Oh my love she is beeowtifull, and she live by thee sea !*”

‘A single man, I suppose?’

‘Right you are, sir; and so agoin’ to remain. It’s the condition, as parson says, in which it has pleased God to place *me*.

“*Whistle—whistle, too the parson, is my words too she,  
Oh my love she is—*”

and they call me the jolly bachelor, sir, that’s what they call me. You don’t want to hear my opinions about marryin’, do you, sir?’

The opinions of this clod about marrying !  
The opinions of a steer about the passion of  
the divine !

‘Well, sir, my opinions is this. Here I be, hoein’ of mangle. I’m as good as my master so long as I doos my work. He arn’t so good as me if he don’t do hisn. That’s what *I* says, and my master he says I’m right. And I know I am, and that’s more. And so my master he says to me one day, says he—“Why don’t ye go and get married, Jonas?” says my master.—“What for?” says I.—“What for?” says my master, “nice and comfitable,” says he.—“I’m comfitable enough,” I says, “a’ready.”—“Nice gal,” says he, “by the fireside,” says my master.—“Plenty o’ nice gals,” I says, “by the fire-side,” I says, “a’ready.”—“But they arn’t yourn,” says he.—“No,” says I, “that arn’t it—it’s me that arn’t theirs.”—“Babbies,” says my master.—“Don’t want ’em,” says I; “and if I did, I knows plenty o’ babbies I could have,” I says, “and choose the best on ’em,” I says.—‘You’re right there,’ says my master.—“I know I am,” I says, “and that’s more. No, no, sir, none o’ that——”

*“ Let us go too thee parson, says my love to me,  
Oh my love she is beeowtifull, and she live by thee sea !”*

‘ There is philosophy in what you say,’  
says Julian, scarcely knowing what he says.

‘ It’s right, sir, and, what’s more, I know  
it is. I hoes my mangle, and I keeps to my-  
self; and that’s the condition in which, as  
parson says, it has pleased God to place *me*.’

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## A VISIT TO COUNT OBERON'S.

COUNT OBERON has not dropped the acquaintance of Professor Gay, F.S.A. He has met the Professor in society several times. He has looked in upon the Professor at his house in the Park, and has been vastly amused by an inspection of his curiosities. He has pressed the Professor several times to run over to see his cottage and what it contains; it is but a cottage, he says, but it is not quite empty. So the Professor has made an engagement to run over to see it, and to take lunch there; and to bring his niece with him.

Madonna has been somewhat unwilling to go. She does not altogether like Count Oberon. There is something about Countess Titania also which touches a jarring string amongst her instincts. But the Professor is

urgent. A little change of society, he says, will do her good. So she consents to go.

The Reverend Theophilus Oldhosen happens to drop in a few minutes before they are to set off; in fact the fly is at the door. The Professor's estimate of Theo is that he is an extremely nice, virtuous, amiable young man, if not likely to make his way in the Church. He thinks, moreover, that the occasional society of such a person as a young curate is good for a dear girl like Madonna, whose nervous system, mechanically considered, is a little disorganised.

Now it happens, about the time that the fly is setting forth from the Park, that a casual visitor drops in upon the Count Oberon, and in fact upon the Countess Titania no less. It is his Royal Highness whom we have heard of before.

Unthinkingly—for it is human to err—the Count has asked the Prince to stay to lunch, as they are expecting to have the company of a deuced handsome girl.

The Prince has promptly answered that he has an appointment elsewhere, but, being always at the service of handsome girls, and

knowing Ob to be a good judge, will put it off. He has, in fact, gone out to tell his servant in person to drive over to the place of appointment and make his excuses for an hour or so.

The pretty eyebrows of the Countess Titania lower not a little, and her bright eyes brighten, as the Prince leaves the room.

‘How could you be such a fool?’ she says.

The Count Oberon remembers that his charming sister is not as a rule in favour of the introduction of new beauties to his Royal Highness. But his great fault is his too great good-nature.

‘I give you my honour, I never thought of it.’

‘Idiot!’

‘Never mind; I’m really very sorry; and she’s only a gawky creature, Tit; you need not fear.’

‘Need not fear! Monsignore tells me that matters are not thought in Rome to look very well for the Prince; and God knows he doesn’t want any more lady acquaintances!’

His Royal Highness has returned to the room.

‘So kind of you, Prince!’ exclaims the charming Titania; ‘but I am afraid we are putting you in harm’s way; you must be prepared to see a *most* fascinating girl.’

The Countess no doubt feels that it is prudent to induce, in his Royal Highness’s imaginative mind, high expectations.

‘I know I shall be disappointed,’ says the Prince, leering, as we may plainly say, at the charming Countess; ‘I’m accustomed, begad! to a high standard. What is she like? Who is she?’

‘Nobody, but divinely pretty.’

‘I like nobodies that are divinely pretty.’

‘I know you do, you wicked man!’

‘Ha, ha, ha!’ says the Prince, ‘begad!’

After half an hour’s pleasant private chat—and it is not given to humbler worlds to know how delightful is the private chat of the world supreme—the little party in Countess Titania’s drawing-room have the pleasure of welcoming Professor Gay, Miss Madonna, and the Reverend Theo. The Countess goes into ecstasies over the Reverend Theo.

The Prince is polite to Miss Madonna, of course; but he does not think much of her.

If he did not happen to know the rogueries of the charming Titania so well as he does, he might be led to question her taste. But the charming Titania, now that there is another lady in the room, is on her p's and has abandoned her q's; that is to say, she is all propriety and no quiz.

'I am so very glad, Professor,' she says with ardour, 'that you have brought your friend; I dote upon the clergy; they are so good—especially the young ones; don't you think so, Prince?'

'Oh yes,' says his Royal Highness; 'I dote upon them too.'

Poor Theo is bowing first to the lady and then to the Prince, looking through his blue spectacles in no little bewilderment.

'What an odd young man!' thinks the Countess. 'I never saw any one so singularly devoid of linen.'

It must be explained to the reader that the Reverend Theo, advancing with the times, has recently joined a private confraternity who adopt as their distinctive principle of Protestant faith the doctrine that salvation is to be won by repudiating the use of a shirt;

and, inasmuch as our young divine is one of those who do nothing by halves, he has turned the extreme thinness of his person to account by stretching forth his neck and arms so far out of his clothes as to provoke the instant observation of any quick-witted person like the Countess Titania. As for the simple-minded Madonna, he might have gone half naked and she would never have noticed it.

Count Oberon and his sister are certainly most charming people, and their house—which is not altogether a cottage—is filled with nicknacks exquisitely chosen. If Master Georgius the Architect were to examine them he would no doubt pronounce them to be simply a collection of the most odiously modern things he had ever seen; but the friends of that great artist now engaged in their inspection are not of such advanced opinions, and it is not to be denied that they are vastly pleased. The Reverend Theo has a vague impression that many of the subjects of painting and sculpture are somewhat free and easy, and he especially observes the fact that the attire of some of

the figures shows as little linen as his own, or less ; but he sensibly reminds himself that he is for the moment in the world and not in the Church. The Emeritus Professor, finding himself quite out of the region of archæology, is content to admire the realm of beauty. Madonna, it must be confessed, is a little distraught, until the native kindness of her hostess determines to divert her attention by leading her into a flow of that exquisite conversation for which the Countess Titania is always so remarkable. The two ladies, therefore, are at length seated together in a bright boudoir window looking out upon a small but pretty conservatory all in full bloom, while the gentlemen are wandering through the rooms.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE COUNTESS AND MADONNA.

‘WHAT can I get you, dear?’ says the Countess Titania; ‘I am sure you cannot be well.’

‘Thank you, I feel a little tired, but I shall be better presently.’

‘The carriage gives you a headache, perhaps; it does with some people.’

‘Yes.’ (‘What is the matter?’ thinks the quick-witted Countess; ‘the girl is upset.’)

‘The drives, dear, are so tedious in London, are they not?’

‘Yes.’ (‘I see how it is.’)

‘I don’t think we have met, dear, since that delightful evening at Mount Medusa.’

‘No, I think not.’ (‘Yes, that’s what it is.’)

‘The Viscount is such a delightful person.’

‘I thought him very kind.’

‘And how is your friend the artist?’

‘I believe he is very well. Always so amusing, is he not?’ (‘Poor thing! she is trying to keep up.’)

‘Most amusing; but so clever!’

‘Very much so, I believe; although I cannot of course understand much of his conversation.’

‘Let me see—who else was there with us?’

‘My uncle, you know.’ (‘My uncle indeed! I see.’)

‘Was my brother with me that night? I forget.’

‘Oh yes.’ (‘No impression, evidently.’)

‘And I think there was a young lady, if I remember, who was tall and artistic.’

‘That was Mariana, my schoolfellow. She is the sister of the gentleman who is with us to-day.’

‘The young clergyman? Oh, how delightful! Is he not a charming young man?’

‘I don’t know very much of him, but I am told he is an extremely well-meaning young man.’ (‘I see.’)

‘But he was not with us at the Viscount’s?’

‘No, he was not.’

‘Oh, I remember now ; the physician was the eighth. The Viscount generally has eight—makes a rule of it.’

‘Really?’

‘Do you know the physician?’

‘Yes, we have long known him—since I was a child.’ (‘She turns pale. I thought it was this.’)

‘Did not I hear that he had been ill?’

‘He has been very ill.’ (‘Yes, and worse than ill, I see.’)

‘Away from home, if I forget not?’

‘Yes ; he has been ordered sea air.’ (‘What a sigh!’)

‘And does he get no better, dear?’

‘I believe not.’ (‘She will faint.’)

‘Poor dear young man ! I cannot tell you how I pity him. You must be very sorry—his friends, I mean.’

‘Might I have—a glass of water?’

The Countess Titania’s boudoir opens into her dressing-room. She will get some water instantly. ‘Take care, dear,’ she says hurriedly, ‘I shall be back in a moment.’

The Countess watches her guest from the

doorway. ('I will give her time to recover herself, or we shall have a scene.')

Madonna calls up all her courage ; puts her handkerchief for an instant to her eyes ; is able presently to sip a little water to cool her parched tongue.

'What beautiful flowers!' she says.

'Do you like flowers?' replies Titania with her most cheerful smile ; 'I think they are so beautiful—the most beautiful things in the world. They have no sting, dear, have they?'

The charming Titania's conversation upon flowers is one of her strong points, and in a few minutes the spirits of her young guest are revived considerably. Madonna smiles again, and quite forgets sorrow in the philosophy of flowers. The Countess is certainly a delightful woman—when, as her brother sometimes tells her, she pleases.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE LUNCHEON.

AT the luncheon-table the host and hostess put forth all their powers; their guests are pleased to the utmost.

The Professor and the Prince have become quite absorbed in each other. The Professor talks incessantly; the Prince listens. It is a thing to be especially cultivated by constitutional royalty, in the opinion of his Royal Highness, the gift of listening.

The Reverend Theo is more than delighted. The Countess, with the most bewitching smile he ever saw, has, before sitting down, desired him to invoke a blessing on the meal; and he has done so in his best manner. To the astonishment of several of the party—although expressed by none—he has turned round his chair; knelt upon it; put together after the

ancient manner his long hands, thrust forth more than ever from his coat-sleeves; laid his head very much on one side, showing a longer neck than ever; and recited a lengthy collect. The fair hostess has smiled upon him almost more sweetly than before; and has whispered to his Royal Highness, who sits next her, the guileless but audible question whether he is not a dear young man. Theo, therefore, as has been said, is more than delighted, and, if truth may be told, is possibly reflecting upon the celibacy of the clergy, as an institution which enables them to enjoy, with a freedom otherwise not to be thought of, the society of the very angels of human-kind.

Madonna sits between the Professor and Count Oberon—the Prince being between the Countess Titania and Theo. Any one who will take the trouble to plan out the table will see that this is not only the proper thing as regards etiquette, but the best thing that the lady could do in the circumstances, so as to keep restive royalty both occupied and under control. Restive royalty, that is to say, has immediately in front of it, not only talkative learning, but combined therewith avuncular

if not paternal presence ; it is also flanked by religion in blue spectacles. Temptation, on the other hand, although on the further side of the board, has religion directly opposite, emphasised by the absence of linen, with guardianship on one hand, and—and dear brother Oberon on the other. Nevertheless the Countess is compelled to own to herself that the gawky girl is sufficiently good-looking, and she wishes herself well out of it.

The Prince could scarcely be a prince if he were not polite. He is drinking sparkling Burgundy, his favourite wine. He has taken a little of it before lunch, for two reasons ; first, because Ob's Burgundy is known to be good ; secondly, because he was being kept waiting—which with his Royal Highness is always provocative of thirst. He now, being a polite personage, catches Miss Madonna's eye while he listens attentively to her uncle's voluble discourse on Etruscan Art, and silently drinks to her with a low bow. The young lady, somewhat nervously following so elevated an example, bows to his Royal Highness pleasantly, and sips her wine. The charming hostess, with a smile beyond all comparison

fresh and cordial—not stale and envious like many other people's smiles—nods kindly at her, as if to say 'How delightful it is, dearest young girl, to see you enjoying yourself so much!' Whereupon Madonna, acknowledging the pretty courtesy, returns the nod, her forehead mantling for a moment with perhaps the effect of the sip, small as it was, of sparkling Burgundy; and the charming hostess has the additional satisfaction of hearing his Royal Highness at her side mutter to himself the words, 'Doocid fine girl, after all, begad!'

Luncheon thus delightfully performed to its close, the Emeritus Professor looks at his watch and asks permission to go to the distance of five minutes' walk to call upon a very old friend, and thus to leave his young people in charge of the Countess Titania for half an hour. The ladies upon this carry each other off to the drawing-room. The three gentlemen are left in the dining-room, and take their seats again at the table, following the lead of royalty—which is loath to leave its Burgundy. Royalty becomes a little more flushed.

‘Ob,’ it exclaims, ‘where dooce d’ye pick up such handsome woman?’

The Reverend Theophilus looks pained. Guileless as the youthful divine is, most reluctant to think uncharitably of any one, and more than most reluctant to think amiss of royalty—knowing it, as he does, to exist dogmatically by right divine or not at all—he has not been so completely satisfied as he could wish with the behaviour of the exalted personage at his side, and this especially since the exit of the ladies. Although only an anxious young clergyman of very uncertain views, he is by nature if not by birth a gentleman; and when he hears one who is by birth so much more than a gentleman, but by behaviour apparently a little less, thus lightly speaking of the respected Emeritus Professor’s pretty young niece, and his sister’s long-beloved friend, he cannot help feeling his face flush up and his breath come short.

But the Count Oberon is too clever a young gentleman, and a great deal too well acquainted with matters of this sort, to allow his face to flush up or his breath to come a pin’s point shorter than usual.

‘Bless my soul!’ he exclaims, looking at the clock on the mantelpiece—supported by Cupid and Psyche in Sèvres—‘how the time goes! Are you fond of flowers, Mr. Oldhosen? My sister will never forgive you if you do not look at her flowers.’

‘Thanks,’ says Theo, ‘I should like to see them very much; really I should, if you please.’ (In the inner mind of the good young man the answer runs thus:—‘I should like very much to be with the delightful lady herself; more indeed, very much more than with, I fear, somewhat inebriated royalty, much as I respect it.’)

‘Let’s all go, begad!’ is the response of royalty, emptying its Burgundy, ‘dooood fine woman!’

Theo passes into the drawing-room in what we are constrained to call high dudgeon.

The Prince follows. (‘Can’t help it,’ the Count Oberon says to himself, ‘Titty will take care of him.’)

The ladies are standing by the window, as the gentlemen enter. Royalty is of a sportive turn, and enters mincingly, very

much as in old times it would have done such a thing as dance a *minuet de la cour*.

The Countess Titania regards his Royal Highness for a moment with a troubled countenance ; but before even one so quick-witted as herself can overcome her astonishment, the Prince has sidled up to her guest, not only sportively but musically inclined.

‘ *Voulez-vous dansez, mademoiselle ?* ’ warbles his Royal Highness in a husky voice, adding with a hiccup as he recovers himself, ‘ Dooceed fine girl, begad ! ’

‘ Sir,’ says the Reverend Theo, ‘ what do you mean ? ’ And it may alarm the nervous reader to be told that the young divine has approached royalty after the manner of his school-days, with the right fist behind and the left arm advanced in front. ‘ How dare you, sir ? ’ shouts the young man ; ‘ come on, sir ! ’

But Countess Titania and her brother are clever people, and can get over a little difficulty of this kind, not only without such a vulgar thing as fisticuffs, but by any one of

a hundred simple processes of finesse in which ease and elegance shall be combined.

‘My dear Prince,’ exclaims the charming Countess, laughing pleasantly, ‘you frighten the poor young lady. I shall scold you ; indeed I shall. If it were not that I know you to be so good, you naughty naughty, I should allow the dear girl to think ill of you, and then where would you be?’

In the meantime the equally charming Count has boldly explained to Madonna, with infinite enjoyment of the fun, that this has been a little dramatic scene got up for her amusement between his Royal Highness and the young divine, and that, by his honour! he never in his life saw anything of the sort played out so well. But he is afraid she does not like it.

No, Madonna frankly says, being all in a flutter, she certainly does not.

Theo, for his part, is somewhat abashed by the glib explanations of Count Oberon ; he therefore retires to another window and wishes the Professor would return.

His Royal Highness, coming to perceive that he has added one more to his many

freaks of folly, and being warned by several glances from the bright eyes of Titania, in the midst of her pleasant laughter, that this is really so, relapses into somewhat sulky silence.

‘The dooce is in it,’ he mutters, ‘if a reigning Prince——’ but, catching the Countess’s bright eye again, he says no more.

He proceeds, however, to assert at any rate his princely dignity; which he does by whistling beneath his breath, ‘*Voulez-vous dansez, mademoiselle ?*’ as if in fine imperious abstraction, gazing with goggle eyes into space.

The Emeritus Professor now returns; and he is full of glee. Not only has he found his friend at home, but he has had a most interesting discussion with him on the Sarcophagus of Mycerinus in the Third Pyramid, from which he has come off victorious. He also brings intelligence that the fly is close at hand, having been in fact seen by him stationed temporarily in front of a tavern not fifty yards off while the driver should finish with a friend a pint of ale. Nor is this all,

for the antiquary has to report for the instruction of the company his observation of a very ancient custom as practised by this driver. That is to say, after dutifully touching his hat to his fare, and taking a last gulp of his liquor, he was seen to pour forth scrupulously upon the ground what remained in the pewter ; and this, the Professor goes on to explain, is beyond all doubt what remains of the ceremonial of offering a libation to Bacchus. The Countess Titania in particular is so vastly interested in all this (albeit that her eyes might be observed to wander a little restlessly at times towards Madonna and the Prince), and she insists upon so much exposition being given by the ready and fluent philosopher, that, when the fly makes its appearance at the gate, not only has harmony been restored, but hilarity superimposed ; even his Royal Highness being made to join in the conversation by exclaiming now and then, 'Yes, begad ! 'Fine old custom,' 'Didn't know it before,' 'Shall put it in practice,' 'Ob, uncork another bottle,' and so on, most affably.

The Reverend Theo, having made an

excuse to go out to the fly to see that all is right, does not return. This manœuvre is no doubt meant to cover a little embarrassment which still hangs about the divine, notwithstanding a thousand blandishments which have been thrown over him by the charming hostess. The Professor, delighted with his visit, takes leave with effusion. Madonna, hoping that tipsy royalty may have sincerely repented its escapade, has the good sense to shake hands with it, after being affectionately kissed by the charming hostess on both cheeks. She has the good sense even not to notice that royalty is smacking its lips.

Count Oberon sees her to the fly; and as he takes his leave she cannot help thinking that certainly he has most lovely eyes.

‘O you fool!’ cries the charming Titania when the Prince is at length got rid of—addressing of course her beloved brother—‘what I have suffered this day, mortal tongue cannot express!’

‘Now, Titty, how should I know that he would be such an ass?’

‘Ass is not the word!’

‘Well, sister, call him what you like; he is

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your friend, not mine. But you know we are due at the duchess's at five.'

'Yes ; oh yes.—I wish I were a man !'

'No, you don't, Tit,' says her brother, laughing ; 'give me a kiss.'

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## A GARDEN-PARTY.

THERE is a garden-party at Mount Medusa. A great many very great people are there ; very fine gentlemen, most of them noble, or highly fashionable, or distinguished, or what not ; very fine ladies to correspond, very handsome and very clever most of them.

The weather is superb. The declining sun of early autumn is thinly veiled by fleecy white cloud—not clouds—seeming to linger in the heaven for the purpose of adding to the pleasure of the guests of so important a personage as his Excellency the Viscount Malign, Ambassador Extraordinary.

The grounds are in perfect condition. The lawn lies like a velvet lake, so that nervous people are known to flinch as they first step upon it, lest it should be but some beautiful

treacherous scum of earthly vegetation on the surface of an unfathomable abyss. The flowers around glitter like jewels, and are odorous as the breath of Paradise. The river flows beyond as if it were of air, not water ; with here and there a glimmer of reflected sunshine like fire beneath.

A marquee has been erected for refreshments; the company do not require to enter the house : it might provoke comment if they did.

The Countess Titania receives the ladies. It is known that the Viscount is a bachelor and has no relatives here ; but the Countess Titania is an intimate friend and a charming woman, and she is the life and soul of the party.

Lais is shut up in the Sanctuary, and sleeps while the world is so gay. Keops, Kephren, Suphis, and Usuphis are in charge of a host of servants brought in from without, all in the genteelest full-dress black, and wearing neat white neckcloths.

The grounds of Mount Medusa are filled with the rippling conversation and the sweet low laughter of beautiful women ; some naturally beautiful, some artificially, some

more or less of both. Birds warble in the trees a sweet accompaniment. Hidden amongst the shrubbery there are musicians, chiefly harpists, who execute, in harmony subdued but rich, *morceaux* from the most fashionable operas. With the musicians there are two ladies of exquisite voice, who sing unseen. No doubt it is well that this soft seraphic choir should be thus hidden ; for it is whispered that they are obliged to refresh themselves from time to time with—if the reader be not ashamed to be told of such a thing—bottled porter.

But there is nothing to be actually seen or actually heard by the company that the reader could possibly be ashamed to be told of ; on the contrary it is the writer who ought to be ashamed to suggest—if he were to do so—the possibility of a single human heart amongst those hundreds being possessed by a single transitory thought of anything but beauty, goodness, gentleness, and truth.

Amongst the rest there are present his Royal Highness of our acquaintance, very carefully dressed and very well-behaved ; my lord the right reverend prelate the Chaplain of the

Palace of the Vatican, of our acquaintance also, of stately deportment and most fascinating manners ; and, again of our acquaintance, the Count Oberon, in attendance on his sister the Countess Titania, both of their exquisite figures elegantly attired, and both of their charming faces wreathed in bewitching smiles.

His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary is everywhere. No doubt he regards every one as if he were a long way off, as we know his peculiarity to be ; but there is no one who does not receive an equal share of his attention, and of his never-failing conversation. His marvellous presence is of itself refreshing, under the autumn sun.

‘ How beautiful the world is,’ the ladies say, ‘ and how delightful the pleasures of society !’ The more contemplative are inclined to add, ‘ How much we have to be thankful for !’ Some of the dear ladies that are more elderly than you might think will whisper to the Viscount, ‘ We should like to live for ever here !’ The Viscount, who knows the guileless ways of these dear ladies, smiles in recognition of this extremely simple and sensible remark. There is one of these dear ladies

in particular, who has come to the Ambassador's garden-party with entirely new teeth, entirely new hair of the most lovely brown, and an entirely new complexion of clear red and white. Being in this condition more playful than usual, this dear lady flirts her fan, and communicates thereby to the aureola of ornaments surrounding her head a tremulous motion, which otherwise might be unpolitely thought to proceed from a different cause. Upon her the Viscount, honouring age, especially when hardly to be discovered except from inconvenient books of the peerage, bestows bows of especial approbation. To him in courteous and sincere acknowledgment the dear lady offers this sportive remark — 'Dear Viscount Malign, I ask no other Paradise than this!' Half a dozen other dear ladies are around her; they laugh pleasantly at so pretty a sentiment; and we may be perfectly certain it never will occur to any one of them to tell the story sportively with the rude remark that it is not at all likely this dear lady in particular will ever reach any other Paradise at all.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## THE PRIEST'S THOUGHTS.

MONSIGNORE SAINT-PAUL, riding slowly homeward from the garden-party, musing on many things, muses upon the quality of the fine company dashing past him on their way to town, musing many of them apparently on nothing, and others on—Heaven only knows what it is that can give trouble to such sweet happy souls!

‘What a world!’ mutters the thoughtful ecclesiastic. ‘What a world!—Fuel for the furnace? No; that is not the answer.—Food for the appetite of grand ambition? No; ambition starves on such flatulent fare.—A spectacle for the observation—perhaps the instruction—of unknown lookers-on? Not even so; the virtue of a higher intelligence would hiss the abortive farce from off

the stage.—A chance-directed carnival, in which a thousand puppets raise their heads a moment, in profitless laughter or profitless tears, sinking again into oblivion to make way for a thousand others, and then a thousand and a thousand more for ever? Nor even so; the wheels of Nature would refuse to roll for the production of so pitiful a dream!—What then? A bubbling cauldron of waste force—a dull volcano half extinct—on whose forgotten surface futile froth rises in aimless mischief, till at length some day the vaporous brush of a cold wandering star shall wipe it out and make a welcome end of misadventure? Nor even this; Heaven is too busy to be played with thus!

‘Oh that I were that little curly boy!—Pshaw! all this comes to nothing. Five thousand years, to our very knowledge, and it has been again, again, again tormenting wisest heads interminably; and what has come of it all? Nothing! Like the profitless recurrence of generation after generation of us puppets of the Earth, so likewise the recurrence of dream upon dream of inquiry and research has agonised the noblest—

least ignoble—of us, and brought forth—exactly nothing !’

‘So be it. If I were that little boy—Stay, what are the aspirations of the yet comparatively innocent young reptile? He beats some smaller boy, I’ll swear! The un-grown miscreant steals a brother’s toy—a very safe assumption. He lies about it—safer still. He beats some tiny girl. He steals her toy; a shabby little rascal, containing all the making of a man—such as it is.

‘What, then, of yonder girl-baby—will this lead us a step farther? If the villanous male of the breed—an animal full from birth of riotous vices—furnishes a clue so hopeless to the mystery of an existence of battle, may not the tender female, tender from her cradle, tender to her grave, suggest some theory that shall offer a moment’s peace to forlorn philosophy?’

‘The Countess looked very pretty to-day. Amongst so many beautiful people, sweet Titania looked sweeter than ever. — I wonder how my young cousin progresses.—“Cousin Paul,” he used to call me, caressing

me—a little flaxen-haired boy. — Full of villainies, I'll swear !

‘ Handsome Oberon was very amusing over the story of the luncheon—very amusing. His Royal Highness, born ruler of men, by divine grace so well anointed, had nearly spoilt our game, I dare say. — Charming Titania in a very perspiration of distress ! Commonly so sweetly cool.—Guileless Beauty in extremity—having no mother by (except Titania)—giving the hand of friendship and forgiveness to—by the grace of God the Beast !—My lady Titania is not so communicative—ha, ha ! The pretty thing was doubly outraged.—“ I wish I were a man !” —“ No, dearest Tit, you don’t ! Give me a kiss.”—A pair of most delightful pigeons !’

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## AFTER THE PARTY.

HIS EXCELLENCY the Viscount Malign, when all his guests are gone, shuts himself up in his Sanctuary with the lamps prematurely lighted, so that his lawn may be cleared of the traces of the festival with all despatch. He paces up and down the floor, as is so frequently his custom. The muffled noise without seems to put the sentinels in the guard-chamber beyond the mirrors more than ever on their mettle; as if they heard the sounds of human labour, struggling in vain, as human labour must, to escape the dismal dark inevitable gulf.

‘A strange world!’ mutters the Ambassador. ‘O little men and women, if you only knew! — What prostituted powers! what spoilt affections! what love divine, what virtue pure, what happiness unsullied, all within your reach, and all forsworn for—*this!*’

‘And then you say the devil does it! You need no devil here to tempt you. The simplest stroke of accident—enough to overturn the noblest of your enterprises!’

‘And those dear ladies once were little cradled infant girls, nursing their dolls!—And all for *this!*’—And our charming Titania—once a little pretty thing, nursing her doll. The world has let the stuffing out, my poor Titania, somehow. You are past the love of dolls already, sweet young creature though you are. The world has used you treacherously, poor Titania; do not say—do not say I did it.’

But before his guests are all gone—the Countess and her brother are the last to go—the Viscount, walking with her along the terrace by the river, has heard the story of the visit of Professor Gay and his party.

‘And the young girl is wasting in grief, you say?’

‘I’m afraid we must say so,’ replies the nimble-witted lady with a roguish laugh. ‘I am really very much afraid we must admit as much.’

‘And the lover mad, do you say?’

‘From what I hear elsewhere, very nearly.’

‘And you feel no remorse?’

‘Oh no.’ Titania purses up her pretty lips and laughs the girlish laugh she would laugh always if the wicked world had not destroyed her doll and let the dust that stuffed its fair proportions all run out. ‘What woman,’ adds Titania, still more roguishly—being quite alone with an elderly friend—‘what woman ever grudges herself a conquest because another woman mourns?’

‘True,’ says the Viscount.

‘Indeed I hope to see the young man shortly at my feet,’ says Titania; ‘he is a good young man; and handsome; and I shall begin to pine for my lover.’

‘I suppose so.’

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## JULIAN'S RETURN.

LATE autumn is turning cold. Julian Saint-Paul has been sent to a more bracing air, and has recovered a good deal. He returns to town.

He is not haunted now as he used to be. He has made up his mind to forget his troubles. He has been reading hard in science, avoiding everything that has not a practical turn. This world, he begins to conclude, is a still more serious matter than he thought. 'It is not a place for amusement,' he says, 'even the most refined, or dalliance the most innocent. Nor for sentiment of any kind, or daintiness; but earnestness and effort. Let the frivolous be frivolous, like flies in the sun; when night comes they go to their place. Let the merry be merry

while they may ; it is not for long. The leaves bud in the spring that the nakedness of the branches may be covered for a short summer day ; the cold wind blows again, and the bare trunk shivers all the more in the remorseless ice.'

'I quite agree with you,' says Sir Constantine, 'this world is made for work, after all ; and those men only who can work and do work are worth their salt. Look at me ; I'm a mere cumberer of the ground, a walking gentleman and nothing more.'

'You are a very faithful friend, Constantine.'

'I don't call that anything. My dog is a great deal more faithful than I am ; infinitely more forgiving. Generous, too, to a degree, and considerate. Just observe. The little work the devil does with dogs is to make them quarrel over such a thing as a bone. But when did you ever see my dog *Cerbère* quarrel with my neighbour's dog about any bone, however large, however small ? He waits on destiny ; the other happens to look away ; some third friend, perhaps, less thoughtful than himself, or more covetous, happens to

provoke dispute ; then he will remove the spoil ; with a delicacy of movement, and even a grace of deportment, far beyond anything you or I could do. *Cerbère* is a perfect gentleman ; always in repose, always free from care, well fed, and with an unfailing trust in Providence.'

'But put him in a cart, Constantine, to drag about the meat for other dogs that do not pull their carts ; what then ?'

'It might be better for him ; for even *Cerbère*.'

'What if Heaven gave you your cart to pull, Constantine?'

'God help me, Julian ! what answer can I give ? I could not pull it ; I am only a gentleman.'

'I am afraid I must confess I am not pulling mine.'

'My dear boy, I want to see you at work again ; you will be all right then, I'm sure.'

'I think I shall be able now. I am not so sluggish now. I mean to go to Sweetbriar Gardens to-morrow. The Sergeant says things are all going wrong.'

'Your friend Master Georgius is the

plague of the Sergeant's life. Dodd and he don't get on at all together. The Catholic lawyer declares that the Protestant artist goes beyond all bounds of his imagination. The Sergeant is appealed to by both sides ; and half his time is passed, with his hair on end and his spectacles on his nose, poring over artistic proposals, upside down, which Dodd pronounces to be simply antichrist.'

'I am sorry for that ; and I'm afraid I shall not be able to render much assistance.'

'That is my fear also, and—to confess the truth—I have refused to let you be bothered. The architect you know ; the lawyer you don't—you have never seen him. But the misfortune is, that one never knows the worst of this architect—he is always breaking out in a fresh place ; and I for one can never discover either best or worst in Dodd—he is a remarkably shrewd, sensible man, quite beyond my comprehension.'

'What is the poor Sergeant to do ?'

'All I can say is this : to see the Sergeant sitting in judgment at Dodd's office is a spectacle for the gods. He listens to the one disputant, and to the other, with a gravity and

patience that would do credit to my Lord High Chancellor. The artist's volubility, the lawyer's *vis inertiae* ; the ardour of the advanced and still advancing Protestant, the quiet obstinacy of the unadvanced and unadvanceable Catholic ; the delightful scorn of Master Georgius Oldhousen ; the imperturbable endurance of Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts, and Dodd ; the honest Sergeant turning in silent amazement from right to left, from left to right ; it is more than anything else like the genius of the present, trying in vain to reconcile the future and the past, not even diverging in their aims so much as careering round and round in a vicious circle, which has neither beginning, nor middle, nor end, and which it is impossible for human understanding to arrest for an instant of time to examine a single point of its philosophy. The situation is sublime.'

'And how does the Sergeant decide ?'

'There lies the final charm of the transaction. The Sergeant ordains that Dodd shall bear in mind what Georgius has been saying, and that Georgius shall not forget the observations of Dodd, and then, putting

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his spectacles in his pocket, swears—so far as a hearty burst of laughter can constitute an oath—that this church of theirs is the very thing, in his opinion, to drive the devil once for all out of Sweetbriar Gardens!

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

DR. BARBECUE.

HE is shown into the Professor's study in the old way. The natty waiting-maid displays all her teeth with joy, and tells him how glad she is to see him well again. And no sooner is the door shut upon him than she rushes upstairs like a demented thing to tell the news.

The Professor is in the middle of a most interesting paragraph; he holds up his hand to deprecate interruption for an instant. Then, raising his eyes, he beholds the well-remembered figure.

‘Julian, my boy! how are you?’

His heart is too full. He mutters rather than speaks, and stumbles as he moves towards a chair. But he seems to signify that he is well now.

‘Take time, my dear boy,’ says the Professor, ‘and you’ll be all right.’

Yes ; give him a little time, Professor Gay, and he will be all right. They are no longer always together now. *She* has fled—away—away to the mist and the mystery out of which she came ! But give him a little time, lest he should rush from the house, or perhaps drop senseless on the floor.

‘Take time, my dear boy ; be careful how you sit down ; I see you’re not quite so well as you think, my dear Julian ; I know what it is myself ; once I was knocked over just in the same way ; overwork I have no doubt ; cerebral, all cerebral, my boy, nothing else ; there now, let me take your hat.’

Julian is recovering himself.

‘It seems so long since I have been here, Professor——’

‘Long ? Let me see ; in the spring, wasn’t it ?’

‘It seems years ago.’

‘A purely mechanical effect, Julian. Now there are some people who hold—it’s astonishing what some people *will* hold—and the

more utterly absurd it is the more inveterately they stick to it.'

'Yes.'

'For instance, I have a long letter this morning from a man in the North—a man who really ought to know better—Reverend Doctor Barbecue—remember his name?'

'No, I think not.'

'Doctor Barbecue at all events. The man holds that the arch was invented by the Romans; imagine such an idiot! Writes me fourteen pages of foolscap, and makes me pay fourpence extra postage, to try to persuade me of a thing that a schoolboy ought to be birched—upon my honour—for not being ashamed of.'

'Yes.'

'The man is utterly oblivious to all knowledge. Why, as early as the fourth dynasty we have examples; and under the eighteenth——'

'I suppose so; and how is—how is Madonna?'

'Not so well, my boy, not so well. You shall see her presently, my dear boy. You and she are such very old friends. You will

be vexed to see her looking so poorly. The dear child looks as pale as a ghost.'

Yes, truly he will be vexed indeed to see her thus. No longer now always together! Alone at last, quite alone!

'But about this Doctor Barbecue—I can *not* expect you to believe what I am going to tell you——'

'May I go upstairs?'

'By all means, my dear boy. Fourteen pages of foolscap, abominable handwriting, and fourpence postage!'

'I can find my way, my dear sir.'

'To be sure you can, my boy. I'll have the passages marked by the time you come down.'

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

TO MADONNA.

BUT he is not to be allowed to find his way. The natty little waiting-maid is waiting for him on the stairs.

‘Show him into the morning-room, Mary,’ said Madonna, pale indeed as a ghost, ‘and I will come down to him.’

Moreover there is a door ajar on the floor above, and some one listens for his footstep—known so well, and come again at last.

When she enters the room he is standing in the midst of the floor looking towards her, waiting for her. He drops on one knee; stretches forth his arms!

Give him a little time—for the sake of this poor world’s infirmities, a little time!

She has scarcely closed the door, and he is thus. Pale and trembling; both of them

pale and trembling. What have they done to be so agonised ?

‘Madonna, stand where you are, I pray!’

No, she cannot ; she must help him ; has she not longed to help him all these months ?

Like a ghost ; like the ghost of dead and buried love, and hope, and life ; nay ! like the ghost of sorrow dead, and fear, and shame, and bad temptation buried ; even like the ghost of some new palpitating birth, of joy and resurrection from the grave !

She kneels beside him on the floor. What have they done ? Bowed down before each other to the dust, what have they done ?

How fair she looks ! Her lustrous eyes, how loving and true ! Her lips so pale, parted still by the same tender smile ! How soft her brow ; although her cheeks have lost their bloom, how soft her hair !

‘Madonna, do not speak—or I shall swoon !’

How grandly he gazes upon her ! Noble ever ; nobler now ! How sweet his voice—like an archangel’s voice to her enchanted sense ! Although his face is hollow, how broad his breast—like the great heart of a god !

They rise without a word. They pass to the window. They look out upon the grey sky—for it is clouded ; upon the dead leaves falling from the trees in a shower. They listen to the cold wind of the inhospitable north. The rain begins to beat against the window.

‘Madonna,’ he says ; he speaks at last somewhat after the old manner ; ‘ I have come to see you before I go to work again. We have passed through——’

She does not answer. She scarcely listens, her mind is so full of thought. She forgets already what it is he has been saying. But she looks up in his face. She forgets what they have passed through ; what can it have been ?

‘But it is over now,’ he says ; ‘all over, dear Madonna ; it is all over, is it not ?’

‘Oh yes ; it is all over now.’

‘I shall come and see you to-morrow, dearest Madonna ; I shall be better to-morrow, and will come and see you—if you will let me.’

If you will let me ! but she resists the momentary temptation to remark the words.

‘I hope you will, dear Julian,’ she replies, pleasantly, smiling in his face ; paler than she used to be, no doubt, but otherwise the same.

He has left his hat in the Professor’s study. They go in together. The Professor has in the meantime marked the passages in Dr. Barbecue’s communication, but is so overjoyed to see both of them looking so much more like themselves again, that he contents himself with consigning Dr. Barbecue to the devil for an ass, and lets his young friend go off to Sweetbriar Gardens with his blessing.

‘Bless you, my dear boy,’ says the Professor ; ‘and let me know how George gets on with his church. He showed me his plans one day ; capital plans ; fine ideas. I shall be interested to know how he gets on. His notions on the Gregorians are vastly good. He is an immensely clever fellow ; and I think he will make his mark with that church of yours, from what I hear !’

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### REST FOR THEO'S FEET.

'I THINK Julian looks better already, my dear child,' says the Professor to his niece.

'Yes, uncle.'

'And I think you look better.'

'I feel much better to-day.'

'Don't forget my buttons, my dear.'

'No, uncle, you may rely upon me.'

There is nothing, my dear child, which produces upon the male man so disproportionate an effect of irritation—no doubt a purely mechanical action on the nervous organisation—as anything amiss with his buttons.

'Yes,' continues the Professor when his niece has disappeared, 'and the more I see of the process of pairing, the more satisfied do I become of its enormous influence upon

the nervous organisation of both the male and the female man ; no doubt purely mechanical, but well worthy of study—and experiment—yes, and experiment. Yes ; and now for the demolition of this Dr. Barbecue.'

But before the good Emeritus Professor has written a single page of the demolition of Dr. Barbecue, visitors are shown into his room. They are the Reverend Theophilus Oldhosen and Master Georgius his brother.

'Why, George, my boy, how are you ? How are you, Theo ? Glad to see you both. I have been talking about you, Georgius, scarcely ten minutes ago.'

'Oh ! have you ?' says Georgius, dropping his eyeglass.

'Julian Saint-Paul has been here, and I was telling him I heard great things of his church.'

'Oh ! I wish he would take it out of the hands of that lawyer fellow, you know. Atrociously modern fellow.' (Fixes his glass again.) 'A perfect incarnation of all the horrors of the nineteenth century. The old soldier chap I rather like. He has a certain amount of true ancient feeling in him some-

where; I can't tell you where, but somewhere; and he stands up to old Dodd like a brick—or I couldn't get on at all.'

'I hear you are making great progress with the building.'

'Yes. The old soldier spares no expense. He says money makes the mare to go; he's always telling us that; and he would have the whole thing finished in a fortnight if he could. I hope Julian will take up the matter himself, though—now that he's well, you know—or I shall go in for murdering old Dodd some day, I know I shall. He's the most unmitigated humbug living,' says Georgius, dropping his glass with the usual rattle.

'By the way, you know something about the arch, don't you?'

'Something? I should think I did. What do you want to know?' Georgius is elaborately refixing his glass.

'Here's a prodigious ass of the name of Barbecue—'

'I know him; regular old woman; the oldest woman in his way I do know, you know.'

'Fourteen pages of foolscap——'

'Appropriate paper.' (Drops his glass.)

'Ha-ha! not bad.'

'I should think not.' (Refixes his glass.)

'Handwriting perfectly impenetrable — almost as bad as yours——'

'Almost as bad as mine—I like that!'

'Ha-ha-ha! Fourpence to pay for postage——'

'Serve you right.'

'Why, my dear George, why?'

'For talking about what you don't understand. My handwriting is pure thirteenth—late but pure. I wouldn't go in for handwriting like yours for a thousand a year.' (Drops his glass indignantly.)

'Forgive me, my dear friend. Now about this Dr. Barbecue——'

'I say, do let him go to the dickens! Look here; Theo and I have come to consult you about a very important matter. Now be all ears.' (A joke of Master Georgius's.)

'My dear George, I am.' (The natural answer.)

'Not quite, or we shouldn't have come, you know.' (Master Georgius, triumphant, refixes his glass.)

‘Ha-ha-ha! Well, what’s the case, Theo?’

The case, Theo proceeds to explain, is one of the greatest moment, not only to himself but to the best interests of mankind. To put it shortly, he has been much disturbed in mind of late owing to the impossibility of finding rest for the soles of his feet. He means in the Church. Divisions abound.

One must be prepared for that, the Professor says; when divisions abound even in exact science, how can theology hope to escape?

Perhaps so; but when all are equally wrong, what is to be done? He has been going in for advancing with the times to the best of his ability; but what when he finds that the process leads nowhere at all? The advancement of the times, when you think of it, can only lead forward, not backward. Forward—to what? Backward—we know where we are.

‘Hear, hear!’ from Georgius, dropping his glass.

But how to get backward is the question; and Theo is driven to the conclusion that the

backward progress of the Via-Median Church is not genuine.

Georgius, refixing his glass, intimates that it is here that the opinions of Theo and himself begin to diverge. He considers that if you will only give the Church time, or rather give the Arts time, everything will come all right, you know.

‘I agree with that,’ says Theo.

‘No, you don’t,’ replies Georgius; ‘you think you do, but you don’t.’

‘What I mean is that if we had two or three hundred years to work in,’ says the young divine, ‘then we might do it.’

‘But having only five-and-twenty before you begin to grow middle-aged and lazy——’ says the Professor.

‘Exactly so,’ says Theo, ‘I see no use in waiting till I am dead, I don’t indeed.’

‘So Theo thinks of going in for going over,’ says his brother.

‘And what do you advise?’ responds the Professor cautiously.

‘I say he would be more of a fool than I take him to be,’ is the prompt and plain reply of the architect. ‘Look at that old Dodd,’

he continues, dropping his glass; if such a fellow's not enough to drive *that* out of one's mind, I say no more. Modern to the backbone! That's what comes of what they call the old faith. It's all talk. The bother I have with Dodd about every little bit of symbolism that I introduce into my plans, no human ingenuity could imagine.'

'I suppose,' says the Professor, 'they have after all lost the real influence of tradition.'

'No, they haven't; at least not in the way you mean, you know; but they will persist in letting bygones be bygones. Good gracious! what's the use of having a past at all if you don't go in for it? What's the use of having ancient ways if you don't stand in them?'

'That's my feeling,' says Theo, 'exactly.'

'No, it isn't indeed, old fellow. You don't understand what I mean. I don't expect it of you. At all events I advise you, if you ain't satisfied to wait, to go in for the Mohammedan Church——'

'The Mohammedan Church?' exclaims Professor Gay with a little astonishment.

'Well! what's the matter now? You get back to be early seventh, don't you, in its

genuine antiquity? What more do you want?' says Georgius, raising his eyeglass.

'I want to go back to the early first, George,' says the young divine, earnestly.

'You think that very clever; and so it is for you. Very well, by all means, try it.'

'Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, Cyril and Athanasius, come before Mohammed.'

'Do they? They're only fourth century, every one of them; and Origen's only third; and Justin Martyr only second, and so on; and you've got nobody in the first but the Apostle Paul, and he doesn't help you, does he?'

'The Apostle, unfortunately,' replies Theo, 'is not sufficiently clear;' and he looks around him through his blue spectacles in honest bewilderment.

'He is all things to all men,' says the Professor, 'if by any means he may gain some—so far as I remember.'

'Practically we find that to signify,' says the young clergyman, 'being weak to the weak, and gaining only the weak. In these days we want to go in for strength and decision.'

‘And the authority of antiquity,’ says the architect. ‘Paul, you know, is essentially modern in his opinions. I believe, if he were alive now, he wouldn’t exhibit the least sympathy with *us*. I should like to see the sort of thing he would build at Marrabone’s!’ Georgius in fact laughs aloud at the apostle as he drops his eyeglass again.

‘I quite agree with you there,’ says Theo.

‘No, you don’t; indeed you don’t, Theo; you’re incapable of it, old chap. But this is what I mean; if you don’t like to go in for the Mohammedan Church, which can’t be denied to be authentic seventh, don’t, for goodness’ sake, go in for the Romish, which is only nineteenth with an old coat on. You’ve got as far back, old fellow, as to do without the laundress; and I admire you for it; it’s more than Dodd has done, or Mon-signore either for that matter.’

‘I am very anxious,’ says Theo, ‘to find rest for the soles of my unfortunate feet somewhere—I don’t care where; this incertitude is very trying; I don’t know what I am doing—whether I am standing on my head or my heels—indeed I don’t.’

The Professor is obliged to confess that he is quite unable to advise. He has not turned his attention to such matters. But he has great confidence in George. If any one understands such matters he must.

'That's what I told Theo,' says the artist, refixing his glass, 'before we came here. The Professor, I said, don't know anything about it, and I do if anybody does.'

'For the present,' says the Professor, 'I should be very careful about making a change.'

'I wish to make it once for all,' says the young man; 'but I cannot go on long like this. It is a very solemn matter.'

'No it ain't,' says his brother; 'it's only a question of Art. Of course it's solemn so far; Art is always solemn.'

'I can't see that, George, I wish I could.'

'I don't expect you can, Theo, old chap; but you really mustn't mind deficiency of understanding. The old men didn't mind it, and look at the beautiful things they did!'

'The absence of affectation,' says the Professor, 'is the first consideration in everything intellectual.'

'Well, I don't agree with you there,' says

the artist, 'and yet I do;' and he drops his glass in a knowing way.

'I wish indeed,' says the young divine, looking pensively down his sleeve to the elbow, 'I could find rest for the soles of my most unfortunate feet!'

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### A NEW VISITOR TO THE POOR.

JULIAN SAINT-PAUL has gone from the Park direct to Sweetbriar Gardens.


Marrabone's corner has indeed changed its aspect. Where formerly there stood a hundred yards in length of grimy walls and barricaded windows, covered to such extent as so poor a neighbourhood would justify with the staring placards of advertisers, most of them hanging loose from their decaying paste, he now sees the same extent of a builder's hoarding inscribed with an intimation that bill-stickers must beware ; and within this enclosure, although as yet only at the further end, the lofty walls of a stately edifice in stone are growing hourly upwards under the busy hands of a little army of masons, who make the air ring with the activity of a new world where there used to be only the silence and decay of the grave.

A carriage stands by the gateway of the hoarding, empty, but with the coachman on the box waiting. It is a very elegant equipage, and the horses, a pair of greys, champing the bit, seem to have a habit of snapping at each other, as some pairs of human beings do. But their master touches them with the whip when this occurs, in order to suppress such indecorum, all very well at home, but not allowable abroad.

Julian pushes open the gate and enters. Within he sees his old friend and co-trustee Sergeant Jollybuff in conversation with a lady. They stand looking inwards towards the building. The lady is elegantly dressed, and of graceful and even youthful figure. What makes the young man's heart flutter? He does not recognise the lady surely? It cannot, for instance, be Madonna Gay, from whom he parted half an hour ago?

He leaves the ground. Perhaps because his heart is fluttering. He will go to his work at any rate. There is a sick girl, the Sergeant told him yesterday, whom he ought to see in Strawberry Lane.

She has not been a very good girl. She



has a pretty face, and she is the only child of her mother, who is a widow. The room is poorly furnished, of course ; and it is not even so cleanly kept as it might be. But there is a little fire in the grate, and on the table there are the tea-things, while the kettle is on the hob. The mother is toasting a piece of bread for her poor girl, who is somewhat dainty.

‘Sure, doctor, and it’s meself is glad to see ye this day,’ is the greeting the young physician receives ; and his heart ceases to flutter, for he is at his work again. ‘And it’s you that’s the kind gintleman to us all, and the Sergeant ; and the hand o’ the Lord has been heavy upon yourself. And are ye better, doctor ? Say ye’re better, doctor dear.’

‘I am quite well again, Mrs. Cassidy ; quite well and very thankful—very thankful to be at my work again. I wish sometimes I had not left it.’

‘Glory be to God ! and the blessing o’ the poor is your own, doctor darlin’, and the Sergeant’s, every day ye live.’

‘And how is my little girl ?’ inquires the doctor kindly, as he takes her thin hand in

his, forgetting surely that she has not been a very good girl; 'why, you were quite rosy when I saw you last; how is this? You must get better now, you know, Bridget—I think your name is Bridget, is it not? You were Pretty Biddy Cassidy?'

'Yes, sir,' says the girl in a weak voice; 'I was.'

'Yes, sir,' says the mother, 'and it's the kind gentleman to remember it, Biddy darlin'. And will I give ye the tay now, if it's faint ye feel?'

'I don't feel the faintness now, mother dear,' says the girl, 'not now that the doctor's come.'

There is a tap at the door. The mother opens it. Sergeant Jollybuff enters.

'I've brought you a visitor, mistress,' says the Sergeant from without. 'And here's the doctor himself. Morning, doctor. Be careful of the stair, mem; you ain't used to our stairs—in the Gardins you ain't.'

The lady enters.

Why is it that Julian Saint-Paul does not rise to receive the lady? He is not wont to be thus discourteous. True, he is touching


the wrist of the sick girl, and counting, no doubt with attention, the languid beats of her too slow pulse. He does not even look up from his task. His hand trembles, visibly trembles.

Mrs. Cassidy, curtsying her very best to the lady, is dusting with her apron a broken chair on which so unusual a visitor may be invited to be seated.

'Thanks, my good woman,' says the lady nervously, 'I am so sorry I cannot sit down. Our delightful Sergeant insists upon my seeing some of his patients; and I am sure I wish I could be of any service; but I am afraid I am a very useless creature, I can only offer you money. How poor an offering it may be, I never knew till now. I had no idea there was anything in all the world like this!'

Strawberry Lane is one of the least eligible for residential occupation of all the branch alleys of Sweetbriar Gardens. Not more than four or five feet wide; paved with rough broken stones, with here and there a muddy hole instead of a stone; the houses irregular in form, as if they had once been all sorts of

buildings but houses ; the doors leading sometimes up steps, sometimes down ; the windows looking like all sorts of openings but windows ; dirt, invariable and inveterate, begriming everything, sweating out of everything, rotting into everything ; the smoke, of such fires as there might be, issuing out of windows, out of doorways, out of holes in the wall, out of broken chimney-pots above, and all seeming to pour down again into the narrow thoroughfare ; children in rags indescribable, filth unutterable, carrying on their violent sports with gestures, expletives, imprecations, invocations, horrors of every possible kind of dreadful shriek and scream that must not even be hinted at ; fierce, tyrannical boys stampeding along the deep defile with savage yells of brutish humour—humour that does not laugh ; half-grown girls storming with foul and blasphemous invective, binding the draggled hair torn down, pinning the colourless rotten skirt rent into ribbons, tying up the torn and sodden shoe upon the stockingless foot ; weird wan mothers looking on ; fathers tipsy ; this is what the Sergeant has taken the lady through.



‘O Heaven!’ she cried, ‘what can this be?’

‘I had no idea,’ she says in the sick-room, ‘that there was anything in all the world like this!’

The voice of the lady, as Julian hears it, is sweet; and the tone is that of soft womanly sympathy, indeed agitation not to be wondered at.

‘Again together! Again, alas! returned! What shall he do? What can he do? Can he possibly pretend to be thus absorbed in merely touching a child’s pulse? He cannot surely be the coward to refuse to face only a chance visitor. Once more at his work, no longer maundering beside the solitary sea; once more a strong man, no longer a sentimental invalid; surely it will be best to face the chance visitor—even if it were a foe. But his heart flutters; it cannot be disguised that his heart flutters.

He rises; bows to the lady; frankly offers his hand. With the ineffable smile of his dreams, the Countess Titania accepts the salute. If the smile is slightly restrained, it is because it is hysterical. The impression made upon a woman’s heart by her first

introduction to abject misery is scarcely favourable to the smiles of even the happiest, the most light-hearted, the most guileless, the most beautiful, the most favoured of kind Heaven.

‘I never thought,’ she says again, ‘of misery like this.’

She stoops down and looks into the beautiful, beautiful eyes of the sick girl. She kisses her wan cheek—as if poor Biddy Cassidy were her pretty sister before God.

Poor Biddy is a little overcome by such unusual attentions.

‘It’s faint ye are again, darlin’,” says the mother, ‘try the drop of tay.’

The beautiful lady administers to the beautiful sick girl.

‘Pray let me do it,’ she says ; ‘let me be of a moment’s use for once in this dreadful world.’

Out of the wretched, ruined room ; out of the wretched, ruined house ; out of the wretched, ruined neighbourhood as fast as may be possible!

‘Home, for God’s sake!’ says the beautiful fine lady to her servant, and he drives his pair

of greys quickly away. She has left her cloak of fur upon poor Biddy's bed, and her purse in the hands of the mother. 'Home, for God's sake ! I never thought there was anything in all the world like this ?'

'How came the lady here, Sergeant ?'

'Well doctor, I can scarcely tell you, and that's the truth. This is the lady that come to see the stone laid. And very pleasant she were ; and says she, "Sergeant, I'll come and see you another day, I will." But I never thought she would. The weather was fine, ye see, doctor ; and Marrabone's was tidied up a bit ; and the Gardins was tidied up a bit ; all to please the great man, ye see ; the lady shouldn't a come on a common day like this, and us not tidied up at all, don't ye see ? not at all.'

'And what was her errand ?'

'To-day, ye mean ? Well, she come to see our church, she said. Which I showed her our church. So says she, "It's very pretty, Sergeant," says she, "very pretty ; and how's the doctor ? And have he come back yet ?" she says. "No, I ain't seen the doctor yet," I says, "but he ought to be here by this

time," I says. And so one of the lads he says, "I see the doctor a minute ago," says he, "and he's gone into Strawberry Lane," he says. "That's to see little Biddy Cassidy," I says, "that's where the doctor's gone, for poor Biddy's badly," I says.'

'Well?'

'And so the lady she says, "Let me go to see poor Biddy Cassidy too," she says. And so she come.'

'I shall not be able to do anything more to-day, Sergeant; I don't feel quite well yet, and must go home.'

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## THE VISITOR'S REPORT.

CHARMING Countess Titania, when evening has come, is thought to be looking pale at a certain unfashionable little dinner in the west—unfashionable because out of season. The gentlemen rally her about it. The ladies express their sympathy. She has been abroad for the last two months ; is in town only for a few days, on her way to a country house, where she and her brother are to stay a week ; goes then to the North for a fortnight ; then goes abroad again.

Monsignore Saint-Paul is one of the little party. He remarks with the others that the charming Titania looks pale. As a compliment which a younger man and one of another cloth might scarcely offer, he suggests that she may have to take to rouge if this goes on.

Being seated by themselves, she tells him

—for of course she can tell him more than other acquaintances—that she has in truth been very much upset to-day. He remembers the young physician, his relative, whom she met at Viscount Malign's? (Yes.) Well, she happened to take a fancy to go and see how the new church was getting on, at the place called Sweetbriar Gardens, where the young physician is so kind to the poor people—he and the strange old soldier, as he will remember, who was at the laying of the foundation-stone. (Yes.) He was nursing a sick girl. (Yes.) A pretty young creature, with such lovely eyes. (Yes.) Dying in a dog-hole! (Oh yes.)

‘I felt so—so—wicked!’

‘Did you?’

‘I asked myself—How can we let such things be?’

‘And how did you answer?’

‘I cannot answer.’

‘Nor can I.’

‘Then I say—How can we eat and drink—and dress—and dance and sing——’

‘And say our prayers out of gilded missals?’

‘Yes, and kneel on embroidered cushions——’

‘In warm furs and costly laces——’

‘Yes, Monsignore ; but to try to make myself believe that I was not utterly wicked, I gave the poor thing my money—it was all I had—may God forgive me some of my sins !’

‘Thrown away, my good Countess Titania—quite thrown away. You should only support organised charity ; you are a kind-hearted person and liable to be imposed upon. Indiscriminate almsgiving does great harm.’

‘I did it for the best, Monsignore——’

‘No doubt ; and what of the doctor ?’

‘I could not help kissing——’

‘Oh fie !’

‘Kissing the poor, pretty, dirty cheek, Monsignore, dying on—such a filthy bed ! It was all I could do. Monsignore, do such soiled creatures ever enter heaven ?’

‘Really, it is very difficult to say. But how did you find Mr. Julian Saint-Paul, my cousin ?’

‘He was very, very kind to the poor, dirty, dying girl.’

‘What sort of girl was she?’

‘I tried to be for a moment of some small use by giving her tea—God help me, and His saints, when I come to be sick and faint like her!’

‘And the young physician propped up her head with the pillow while you administered the tea?’

‘There was no pillow; she laid her head on his arm.’

‘He must have looked very handsome, dear Countess Titania; he was always a handsome young man.’

‘I know she will die—perhaps before to-morrow morning. I dare not go to see her again alone. Will you go with me, Monsignore? My carriage must be at the door.’

‘Dear Countess Titania, I must really forbid you——’

‘I am afraid I am very silly.’

‘Very.’

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## A FACE IN THE FIRE.

BUT it is not yet evening when Julian Saint-Paul has lowered the blinds of his windows; closed the shutters; drawn the curtains. And he has not called for his lamp; he does not call for it; the firelight is enough; he sits down and stares into the fire. From Sweetbriar Gardens he walked forth to-day—scarcely knowing whither—away into the country for miles; and he has only now reached home.

He has been thinking all this time, and muttering to himself as he walked along; thinking he scarcely knows what, muttering nothing that he remembers. What he thinks of now is—childhood's fancy—that there may be faces in the fire. There is one face he finds himself to be looking for in the fire.

A beautiful face. Not a smiling face, because pity has driven away its smiles ; but a very tender face, with moistened eyes and quivering lips ; what lovely eyes, what bewitching lips !

The tender face bends over the mean uncleanly bed ; how tenderly ! The moistened lovely eyes gaze into the poor dying eyes ; how tenderly ! The quivering bewitching lips kiss the wan soiled cheek ; how tenderly !

It is not an inviting cheek to kiss ; and this is a very dainty sister that kisses ; but the kiss is soft and sincere.

The delicate gloved hand administers the grateful drink from a cracked and discoloured cup ; a soft white handkerchief, stamped with a proud device, is spread upon the thin sunk breast ; the fragrance of voluptuous flowers perfumes the wretched chamber ; this is a goddess stooping down from out of the heavens on our dark dismal world, to succour for a moment the forlorn.

All this he sees in the fire, and the sight of it burns into his heart as if the coals were glowing on his breast.

It must be—seated opposite to him, in the shadow of a screen that stands by the hearth—with calm, inflexible, impenetrable, cruel countenance—looking straight into his soul—it must be the Viscount Malign !

‘ Is all this—this that I see in the fire—is all this—the sight of which burns into my heart as if the coals were glowing on my breast—is all this—*true*, Viscount Malign, or *false* ?’

‘ True.’

‘ She shed no tears.’

‘ Sorrow may be too deep for tears.’

‘ Her hand did not tremble.’

‘ The heart may be too full for trembling.’

‘ She did not speak to me.’

‘ Too full for words.’

‘ Is woman, Viscount Malign, angel or devil ?’

‘ Neither ; woman.’

‘ Real or unreal, then ?’

‘ Real.’

‘ Substance, not shadow ?’

‘ Substance, not shadow.’

‘ Heaven ? Earth ? Or—Hell ?’

‘*All!*’ And in the shade of the screen that stands by the hearth there is nothing; a flame spurts out from the coal, and there is nothing to be seen—nothing at all—not even the chair on which it sat.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

AT MR. DODD'S.

THE clock strikes six, and he recollects that he has to dine with Mr. Dodd in order to meet Master Georgius the Architect and discuss his plans for the new church. Sir Constantine Gay is to make a fourth at dinner. The names of Mrs. Dodd and daughters are on the visitors' list just now at the seaside; the ladies being joined by the head of the family from Fridays till Mondays. Sir Constantine ought by rights to be on the moors, but he waits in town for a week or two to see his friend Julian set on his feet again; they have been all the way to the northern isles, and round by the mountain lands on a holiday trip together.

The architect, also, has just concluded his holiday trip, consisting of a fortnight's

study on the spot of certain famous round towers.

Julian is not much in the humour for dining out; neither does he care for the discussion of ecclesiastical symbolism and Gregorian art with Master Georgius Oldhousen, much as he esteems his abilities; but, even if he were disposed on any other ground to break his engagement, he considers it unnecessary; for the investigation of the designs for a church of All Saints and Angels will do as well as anything else to distract his attention from the untoward occurrence of the day. At seven o'clock, therefore, he is in the drawing-room of Mr. Dodd's desirable suburban family residence (with stabling attached and standing in its own grounds); where Sir Constantine Gay has arrived a few minutes before the time, animated by the considerate purpose of personally introducing him to the eminent attorney; and where also Master Georgius the Architect arrives in due time of his own—that is to say, five and thirty minutes after the hour appointed and not in the least hurry.

Mr. Dodd is found to be a clean-shaved

elderly gentleman, of imposing appearance ; with short iron-grey hair standing permanently on end (to the architect's great satisfaction until he came to know him better) ; exceedingly large and exceedingly stiff shirt-collar ; a very deep and very stiff white neckcloth ; a very spacious and very stiff shirt-front, frilled ; and a massive bunch of gold seals, hanging from the fob of a remarkably tight pair of trousers, under a white waistcoat made to fit loosely a waist of no inconsiderable girth.

By the time the architect arrives—which is just as they are about to go in to the dining-room without him—the lawyer and his two more punctual guests have come to a very fair understanding together so far as general principles can carry them. Whether Mr. Dodd may be as straightforward as he seems is not of much moment with men of the world and men of business ; but his ideas of the purpose of old Mr. Marrabone's bequest, even if they were not declared by him to have been derived from the express although indirect utterances of the deceased, are manifestly founded on good sense and broad views

of life. He would like to see built in Sweetbriar Gardens an imposing and dignified edifice, substantially constructed and suitably adorned—that is to say, simply and gracefully designed. He desires to see even grandeur, so that the imagination of the worshippers, even in so poor a place, may be impressed with some faint sense of the majesty of divine presence. He has no wish to see his client's money spared ; under proper management it is much more than amply sufficient in amount for the object in view. But he hopes to find that no controversial element of any kind will be introduced, to disturb that equanimity which is so essential to the success of the undertaking in such unusual circumstances ; and, to secure this good end, he has earnestly urged upon the architect, whose abilities are undoubtedly as great as his learning is profound, to err on the side of modesty, and even to favour commonplace. This doctrine commends itself forcibly to both his auditors. Sir Constantine has it on the point of his tongue to observe at the conclusion of the exposition that Master Georgius seems to be the last man in the

world, if he errs at all, to err on the side of either modesty or commonplace in anything ; but he is a gentleman of prudent forethought, and forbears. Julian, to tell the truth, has but a vague impression of what the lawyer has said, and assents to it therefore with less difficulty.

Dinner has scarcely begun before it is discovered that Master Georgius is now all for round towers. No church can, in his opinion, have any pretension to the possession of the authentic spirit of the old men unless it has a round tower. Artistically considered, the effect of round towers is magnificent ; and historically they take you right back to the fifth century. He is sketching out something for All Saints and Angels, you know, which will outstrip everything that has ever been done in that way. It is after a leading example which he mentions ; comparatively late it is, but so much the better ; it's tremendously magnificent ! There ain't a window in it all up and down, except one about two feet high and a foot wide about half-way ; the effect is the finest he ever saw ; the whole thing goes aloft like an engine-chimney, with-

out a line of ornament upon it—magnificent! If there's anything he hates it's ornament; any fool can do what he likes with ornament, but it takes a man with some brains in his head to do what he likes without ornament. Thanks, he'll go in for turbot, he thinks. Oyster sauce? No; he can't find any authority for oyster sauce.

Sir Constantine ventures to say he has seen some of the round towers in question, but really would hesitate to admire them much, except as curiosities.

That, Master Georgius replies, is because he doesn't understand them, you know.

Mr. Dodd has never heard it fully explained what is supposed to be the origin of those round towers. Were they for beacons?

Beacons? is the artist's reply, dropping his eyeglass. Of course not; quite ecclesiastical; a sort of Gregorian towers, you know; and magnificently quaint; no nonsense about them, you know; if there's anything he hates, it's nonsense.

Sir Constantine hopes they are to have a peal of bells.

The architect thinks, replacing his glass, they will have to be hung outside all round the top, if they must have them; he can't have any windows in the tower, you know. In answer to further inquiries, he intimates that he is going in for building the round tower of All Saints and Angels at once quite independently of the church; there being no work about it, he thinks it can be finished in a month; it is to be covered with a low roof of stone, without any cornice, you know; the effect will be magnificent; not even an ornament on the top; one solitary window about two-thirds of the way up, just large enough to hang a bell out, or a man if we lived in the good old times; nothing inside but the bell-rope; superbly magnificent effect—all the spirit of the old men about it. Here he releases his glass with unusual skill, which falls against his buttons with an unusual rattle.

Mr. Dodd makes bold to suggest that, with an elaborate thirteenth century chancel at one end of the Marrabone ground, and a crude round tower at the other, the design of the intervening edifice—the nave or main

body of the whole building—may have to be reconsidered.

Of course, is the architect's reply, refixing his eyeglass, any fool can see that. He abandons all his plans, of course. 'In fact,' says he enthusiastically, 'we're in this position, you know; you'll see the force of it in a moment, all of you; you can't help seeing it. Here we are with the tower: I shall go in for building it quite rough on purpose, and have it washed over with something—that's matter of detail, you know—to produce fungus or moss, or lichen, or whatever you choose to call it; and I shall plant things in the crevices as we go up—wall-flowers and horse-leek, and ferns, and couch-grass, and all that kind of thing, you know.'

'But what is all that for?' says Mr. Dodd.

'What is it all for?' says Master Georgius, dropping his glass. 'Why, what could it be for? To give authenticity to the tower, of course! Well, then we've got our tower genuine to begin with—fifth, say sixth century. Then our chancel is, as you say, at the other end; it's genuine thirteenth, early thirteenth, in fact. Well, what follows? why, any-

body can see that the nave has been very much earlier, and has fallen down. I don't like to restore it in eleventh, so I won't go in for that ; I'll try a mean.' Refixing his glass again, the artist looks around him with unusual defiance.

'What is that ?' says Sir Constantine.

'Add them up and divide by two, you know. Six and thirteen—or rather five and a half, I should say, and twelve and a quarter—make seventeen and three-quarters ; divide by two, and you have eight and seven-eighths, which is very late ninth, you know. Then the next step——'

'I should say,' interposes Mr. Dodd, 'the next step would be to add east and west together and divide by two for an average.'

'Now then ; that's not so clever as you think it.' The architect drops his glass. 'At any rate, I'll go in for long and short work, and all that kind of thing ; nobody else can make anything of it, but I shall make something magnificent ; you see if I don't. My mind's quite made up.'

'But we shall have the pleasure of seeing your present designs ?' says Julian, who is

getting weary of the conversation, in which he does not join, and of the dinner, of which he does not eat, and no less of his own thoughts, which he cannot drive away.

‘No,’ replies the artist, ‘I haven’t brought anything at all. I’ve thrown them all aside. I’m busy on the tower; and I’ve stopped the work on the choir till I reconsider it. What a splendid thing we shall have now! I’m precious glad I went to see those round towers; you can’t think how glad I am!’

‘I think I can,’ says Sir Constantine.

‘No you can’t’ (refixing his glass and shaking his head); ‘you ain’t capable of it, not one of you. You may think you are, and I dare say you do.’

Seeing by this time that his friend is ill at ease, Sir Constantine changes the subject. ‘I wish,’ he says, ‘it were as easy to pull down the Sun in Heaven and the Pilgrim’s Rest, as it is to build up All Saints and Angels. What say you, Julian?’

Julian replies by asking Mr. Dodd whether any of old Mr. Marrabone’s money could be applied to such a purpose.

Mr. Dodd had thought for a moment that

Sir Constantine was scoffing, not knowing much of him. It has to be explained to him that the Sun in Heaven, standing at one end of Sweetbriar Gardens, the property of Messrs. Charity, and the Pilgrim's Rest at the other, the property of Messrs. Mercy, are establishments authorised by English law (knowing as it does of no wrong that has not its remedy), for the satisfaction of that perpetual public thirst which, if unsatisfied, might disappear—being, as Sir Constantine remembers Professor Gay to have described it, a mechanical incident of a morbid character and nothing in the world else.

‘While we drink this wine, Sir Constantine—you need not be afraid of it, it is a genuine *Vino de Pasto*—what do you think of the case?’ This is the answer of the lawyer. ‘I am a man of the world; so are you——’

‘So am I,’ says the architect, dropping his eye-glass.

‘So is Mr. Oldhousen; so are we all. The question is—not whether a thing in this world ought to be, but what can be substituted for it, how it can be substituted, when the change can be brought about most con-

veniently, and how the substitute is to work when we have got it.'

'Alehouses,' says Master Georgius, refixing his glass, 'are of great antiquity.'

'Noah,' remarks Sir Constantine, 'a most respectable elderly person, certainly got very tipsy, very.'

'I know something about that,' says the architect. 'It was no more than this. He hadn't had any for so long a time that it took effect upon him. They hadn't bottles then—not even skins, you know, to keep it in. So it went to his head, you know, after the long abstinence—that was all.'

'Your theory,' says Mr. Dodd, 'scarcely accords with the authorised versions, Mr. Oldhousen.'

'I don't suppose it does,' is the architect's reply, dropping his glass; 'I never go in for authorised versions; I never think it worth my while to believe anything if it's in accord with authorised versions.'

'If we were to buy up your taverns,' says Mr. Dodd, turning to Julian, 'and build oratories on the ground they occupy, and keep the bells that call to prayers ringing all

day long, Messrs. Charity would re-invest the money next door to the one, and Messrs. Mercy next door to the other ; and our bells would be indicted at common law as a nuisance.'

'Why not impose heavy taxes?' says Julian.

'They are heavy already, however light, and their reduction is made a political cry. Messrs. Charity and Mercy command many votes in the Legislature, and their jolly vintners, if pushed to it, could virtually elect the House. We are men of the world, and must take the world as we find it.'


'Can we do nothing to improve it?'

'I have not heard of anything yet.'

'What I dislike about it,' says the architect, refixing his eyeglass, 'is the pewter. I drink out of a black jack, you know, and then it's quite different.'

'My uncle,' says Sir Constantine, 'would only allow us to drink beer out of a skull.'

'That's carrying it to excess,' says Georgius; 'there's reason in all things ; I stop at the black jack.'



‘We can at any rate preach a crusade,’ says Julian, ‘and trust to Providence for the advent of a better day.’

‘Oh yes,’ says the lawyer; ‘and take the crusader’s reward; he captures Jerusalem and dies in a ditch. The saying is not mine; it is what I heard once from the lips of a very eminent divine—by the way, sir, your very distinguished relative, Monsignore Saint-Paul.’

‘I hear,’ says Sir Constantine, ‘that Monsignore is likely to transfer himself entirely to Rome.’

‘I cannot say; he is one of our most popular divines; a great acquisition from the first.’

‘I have been thinking,’ says Julian, ‘whether he could be induced to take charge of this building enterprise. I fear the Sergeant and I are scarcely equal to it.’

The idea is received not unfavourably.

‘My health,’ continues the young man, ‘is precarious, and I have much work to do—if I could do it.’

‘What would the soldier say?’ inquires the lawyer.

‘The good Sergeant,’ says Sir Constantine, ‘I can answer for.’

‘For my part,’ says the architect, ‘I should be delighted to have a client who would understand me a little; I don’t ask for much understanding, you know, in these days, but a little at any rate is desirable.’ He drops his glass with an air of sincerity.

‘I don’t think I should understand you, Georgius,’ says Julian; ‘it is really so very much out of my way.’

‘Of course it is, old fellow; you always had a gleam of good-sense in you.’

‘I can ask Monsignore,’ says the attorney in an insinuating tone; ‘he is of a most considerate and accommodating disposition—quite a man of the world. Take some more wine, Mr. Oldhousen.’

‘I don’t like your glasses, you know. They’re so very modern. Nothing seems to taste right out of such things.’

‘Imagination, my dear sir, has so great a share.—Don’t you think so?’

‘No, I don’t, it’s the art-sense.’

‘So it is.’

‘I shall bring my own glasses with me the next time I come.’

‘Do ; and a black-jack.’

It is settled presently that Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts and Dodd shall lay the case before Monsignore Saint-Paul.

## CHAPTER XL.

### ANOTHER QUARREL WITH THE EARL.

PARSON JOHN JACOB has had another quarrel with the high-nosed Earl. Such quarrelling, once fairly engendered, soon exhibits a well-known faculty of reproduction.

The noble lord, seeing that his rabbits are objected to by his selfish tenants, and his turnips stolen by their selfish servants, and feeling that he is a noble lord now getting into years and therefore tied to time as regards his noble enjoyments, has bethought himself of trying a new sensation. As a veteran sportsman — which Parson John Jacob, by the way, has recently defined in the pulpit to be a sort of worn-out old Red Indian—he has vastly enjoyed a recent trip to the forest lands of a neighbouring country, where he has been treated to the amusement

of hunting the wild boar, and in fact also the wolf. To make a long story short, his Lordship has now resolved to import a pair of wolves (to eat his rabbits), and a pair of wild pigs (to eat his turnips). His keeper has delivered an official report—verbally, because he is no penman, but still in a way that displays a spirit of great research as well as critical acumen—to the effect that, with the help of two or three more men to see that they don't escape beyond the limits of his Lordship's estate, so as to be killed by neighbouring proprietors of less liberal views, the foreign game may be accommodated in certain covers which are pointed out, and which have the indispensable advantage also of being well removed from his Lordship's own farming operations. His Lordship, being of a perfectly frank disposition, never thinks of suggesting to this intelligent officer the expediency of reticence; and accordingly the noble purpose is revealed with glee to a select party of toppers in the tap-room of one of the village taverns. The intelligence terrifies the noble lord's tenantry—who dare not complain; astonishes the noble lord's

neighbours—who mind their own business ; and speedily reaches the ears of the parson—who at first does not believe it.

But a week or two afterwards, it comes to the parson's knowledge that his Lordship's legal agent, happening to hear of the proposal, has told a confidential friend that he must 'try to get his Lordship by himself' on the subject.

His Lordship, as everybody knows, is not to be coerced, or even remonstrated with. He has a constitutional aversion to be dictated to ; which is pretty much the same in practice as a distressing dislike to be advised. Even when his Lordship's otherwise perfect self-assurance may be so far at fault as to lead him specifically to ask for counsel upon any point which, in common indiscriminate language, he does not in the slightest degree understand ; or when his Lordship's instinct of caution induces him to seek for a little information from somebody for fear of getting into a scrape ; it is well known to all who have the honour of being invited in such circumstances to lend his Lordship the assistance he requires, that the only course to

take with his Lordship is to let him have everything his own way, and to seduce him either from his own opinion when he has any, or into a particular line of thought when he has none, by artful insinuation rather than direct recommendation—inasmuch as direct recommendation is a rat that his Lordship smells in a moment, as first-cousin to the dictation which he so much abhors. His Lordship consequently has a peculiar habit of throwing his nose in the air when engaged in discussion—especially the discussion of his own affairs—which affords to all who know him an unmistakable indication of what is passing in his Lordship's mind.

What his Lordship's legal agent means, therefore, by saying he must get his Lordship by himself on the subject of the foreign game, is that he must try to keep his Lordship out of a mess by taking the first favourable opportunity, when he happens to be alone with him, to provoke him ingeniously into a conversation on that subject, whereby it may be made to come out quite accidentally that there are possible inconveniences attaching to the proprietorship of wild boars

and wolves running at large in this country, and that in fact there are inconvenient people sitting in authority, who, upon being appealed to, may be found to hold inconvenient opinions about such a thing.

The cause of quarrel between the Earl and the parson is thus to be at once perceived. The parson does not choose to wait for an indefinite time until his Lordship's circum-spect attorney shall find an opportunity for thus getting his Lordship by himself; but, happening to meet the head-gamekeeper one day in the road, tackles him categorically for explicit information, warning him where he will go to if he gives him any of his lies, and in the end sending a message to his Lordship which the head-gamekeeper faithfully delivers.

His Lordship thereupon, in the graphic language of the keeper, damns the parson up hill and down dale and right through the water like a good 'un; wanting to know what the devil the world is coming to when a gentleman can't do as he pleases on his own land, egad! In fact his Lordship desires the keeper to take his compliments to the

rector directly and tell him a bit of his mind—to which he gives expression forcibly. The keeper is glad to find the parson not at home; and leaves his message, shorn of various literary graces, but otherwise substantially correct, with the parson's man; who thereupon threatens to punch the keeper's nose an he be not out of the place like a shot; all this serving to inflame the misunderstanding. It is still more inflamed when the Reverend John Jacob is advised by his servant in a towering passion of what has happened, and flies into a towering passion himself; and the parish is now permanently involved in all the horrors of war.

The first effect of these incidents is to fix in the mind of the high-nosed Earl beyond all possibility of a revision the firm resolve to have the foreign game brought over forthwith as a matter of principle, egad!

The second effect is to make the parson forget, in view of such prodigious outrage nearer home, the hitherto supreme enormity of guilt attaching to the behaviour of his nephew Monsignore Saint Paul, prelati-

chaplain now of the Palace of the Vatican, and perhaps a little beyond his reach.

‘Compared with such an ass as this,’ says the parson, ‘Paul is not such a bad fellow after all. His little manœuvres don’t hurt anybody else if they don’t hurt himself; and I’m told he fattens on them admirably. I hope they’ll make him Pope; I should like to see Paul Pope prodigiously. Paul always was a clever fellow and a credit to the family. I wish I had him here to give my lord a dressing. Paul would do it in a quieter way than I do. Not that I think such a born idiot entitled to any mercy, and I’m sure I don’t show him any; but Paul would heap coals of fire on his head—if he had such a superfluity!’

## CHAPTER XLI.

## THE PARSON TO JULIAN.

‘My dear Julian,’ writes Parson John Jacob at this juncture, ‘I am delighted beyond measure to hear of your recovery. Stick to your work, my dear boy ; and that will cure you of the dumps. What should I do if I did not stick to my work ? Here’s my lord, not content with carrying on the trade of a wholesale poulterer and fishmonger, by feeding what he is pleased to call ground-game off his tenants’ crops, who dare not in these times call their souls their own, and sending the carcases of the vermin into the market at eightpence-halfpenny a head including the skin ; but he must needs import lions and tigers, for what I know, to eat up their wives and children ; and we shall have eagles let loose upon us next to pick our eyes out, and

serpents to snap us up in detail off the trees as we walk along our own lanes. Was there ever such an utterly crackbrained anthropophaginian heard of ! I often think of your cousin Paul, and how pleasantly we used to get on with this man's father. I quite agree with you as regards your putting your Popish chapel into Paul's hands. It keeps the thing in the family ; besides that Paul is undoubtedly, with all his faults, a fellow of great abilities. Moreover, he knows when he is wrong, and takes a rebuke without flying into a passion. We all have our faults, my dear Julian ; and no man knows his own shortcomings better than I do, or is more ready to acknowledge them ; but when I have to do with a man who takes up nearly half my church with a family pew which he won't use, and keeps the door locked, when I dare not break it open, I begin to despair of the country. What we want in the Church is a few men of the stamp of Paul, conscientious men with a will of their own. I wish I could see Paul come back and be an arch-deacon ; he and I would soon polish off the Earl, I'll wager a farthing candle. Make my

compliments to Paul, and say I quite approve of his taking your chapel into his hands. After all, my dearest boy, what are our little differences of opinion, upon a subject we can never understand, compared with the duty that is laid upon us all in God's name to rescue this world from sin and wretchedness ? But how are we to carry on such a work in the face of people who cannot use the small allowance of brain with which it has pleased a forbearing Providence to burden them, except in the company of miscreants in velvetreen, armed with double-barrelled fowling-pieces ? If my lord were a drunkard, or a libertine, I should have some hope of him ; but as what he calls a veteran sportsman, I can only consign him to the devil out of sheer inability to discover what else to do with him.'

Julian is perhaps a little surprised, certainly much gratified, to receive this approval, so unreservedly expressed, of the suggestion which he has had in his mind for some time back, and concerning which he wrote to his father a few hasty lines before leaving the house of Mr. Dodd, feeling doubtful whether

he might be in a fit frame of mind another day.

In the meantime the repetition of his visit to the Professor's has had to be deferred ; he is again confined to his room.

He reads science, however, perseveringly.

On receiving his father's letter he writes to Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts, and Dodd, reminding them of Mr. Dodd's promise to see Monsignore Saint-Paul respecting the undertaking at Sweetbriar Gardens ; and taking the opportunity of stating that he has asked the advice of his father, the Reverend Mr. Saint-Paul of Ditchwater, who approves heartily of the proposal in question, and sends his compliments to Monsignore with the expression of such approval.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## THE PARSON TO MONSIGNORE.

MONSIGNORE has been out of town, spending a week or two at a great feudal castle in the south, a seat of the ancient faith. Mr. Dodd has not seen him to submit the matter of the Church of All Saints and Angels at Sweetbriar Gardens for his consideration, but waits his return.

Monsignore, at the great castle in the south, has received his letters one morning. There is amongst them a bulky packet which contains the correspondence forwarded daily from town ; and this he opens first. His eye falls upon one superscription which is in a well-known hand ; the sight of it vexes him. Monsignore is not easily vexed. His recent visit to the serene world of the seven hills has done him great service both in his

prospects and in his demeanour. He is as princely as the princely noble whose hospitality it is deemed an honour for him to accept. But he is slightly ruffled when he recognises the handwriting on this letter. 'There has been enough of this,' he says to himself; 'quite enough, I think.'

He has sufficient strength of mind to enable him to peruse all the rest of his correspondence before opening this letter. His correspondence is not wholly free from elements of anxiety, but probably this letter may be more unpleasant than any other. At length he opens it:

'MY DEAR PAUL,

'Shake hands. You are one of the family after all. What I especially admire you for is that you can take a rackety old uncle's oburgations without flying into a passion. I hate people that are always flying into a passion. I sometimes get heated myself. No man knows it better than I do. I wish I could keep as cool as you do. But when you have to pass your life in the neighbourhood of a raving lunatic, I defy any one

to be always as cold as ice. I often think of you, when I remember the happy days we passed together here, and how nicely you used to manage the old Earl, who, in spite of his being very much of a baby, as you will remember, had occasionally a lucid interval, which his successor never has by any accident of fortune. Imagine my lord actually introducing a herd of wild boars into my parish! And flocks of wolves! He has the hardihood to add public insult to private injury, by telling us that the one will consume his turnips so that they shall no longer be a source of temptation to my people, and that the other will dispose of his ground-game, which seem to be considered an encumbrance on his estate. Sarcastic old ruffian! Who would think by the look of him that his head was capable of engendering such invective? I have an idea that he has got it out of some book; I would give five pounds if I could find the passage. You used to know most things, my dear Paul; try if you can find it for me. I often wish I had you with me; I am getting old and cannot contend with the wicked as I

once could. The world beats me, Paul; I am afraid it beats all of us in the end. We want more men like you, especially in the Church; men of broad views and with a will of their own. I know what it is to be a fighting man; but we want field-m Marshals, Paul, that is what we want. If I could see you back, and a bishop, I should die happy. Not that I stand upon punctilio in matters of *credo*: you know I do not. The world, spread out under the pitying eye of Heaven, has quite enough of work for all of us to do, and it is my irrevocable resolution always to believe that the Lord above takes little account of the fashion of a man's jacket, whether it is a chasuble or a black gown, or for that matter a cutaway coat, if the *man* be there, Paul, doing the *work* with a will. God bless you, Paul! have it your own way; I won't say another word. I am a rough-and-tumble old bulldog; shake hands once for all. Well, that being settled, I am immensely pleased to find that my boy Julian, who is a good boy, thinks of calling you in to take charge of the chapel he is engaged in building under the will of that extraordinary old

gentleman. Julian has been ill, and it is too much for him evidently. So if you are disposed to take it off his hands, it will be a relief to me and a kindness to the boy ; and so I have advised him. I myself am tormented to death by my lord's perversities, and I see plainly that I shall have my hands full of him for the rest of my days, trying to keep the peace in my poor parish. Otherwise I might have volunteered to lend some assistance myself ; but it is not to be thought of. Imagine my state of mind in the prospect of spending the rest of my life in a vain endeavour to coerce into the semblance of common-sense—I don't ask for more—a man who can never by any chance display a gleam of rationality ! Wild boars ! Wolves ! I expect any night to find a mastadon putting his nose in at my bedroom window, or a vampire sucking my blood ; to say nothing of half a million of buffalo rampaging through my churchyard during the morning prayer ! I say it is not to be borne : no man with a spark of courage would submit to it ! Good-bye, Paul : I hope to see you an archbishop before I die, and remain

Your loving uncle.'

## CHAPTER. XLIII.

## MONSIGNORE'S REPLY.


'JUST so,' says Monsignore Saint - Paul to himself when he has read this letter, 'just so. I think this will do. I shall be pleased to have done with my uncle on such terms.'

Monsignore is not elated in any way. He does not desire even to re-peruse the letter for fear of mistake. The writer has offered him what mercantile men call a transaction ; he thinks he can accept the transaction—that is, if he quite understands it. He knows his man and he knows his own mind ; the transaction he thinks will do. It is Monsignore's habit to regard everything in this way. Business is business ; everything is business. This Reverend John Jacob, who is Rector of Ditchwater and a pamphleteer, proposes an alliance instead of—a certain armed

opposition. Monsignore, who is a prelatie chaplain to his Holiness the Pope, will accept the alliance on what he understands to be the terms proposed. It suits his purpose on those terms; just as it may suit the purpose of Messrs. Rothschild & Co. to buy bonds, say at one hundred and one and one-sixteenth. If it does not suit their purpose to buy at less than one hundred and one and three thirty-seconds, they will not buy at one hundred and one and one-sixteenth. What, then, are the terms of this Reverend John Jacob? Monsignore's task is simply to see that they are properly defined.

Far be it from the narrator of these incidents to take upon himself to expose the current of thought which passes through the mind of Monsignore Saint-Paul, prelatie chaplain to his Holiness the Pope *in esse*, and God only knows what *in posse*. The reader must judge as he best can from what Monsignore proceeds to write in reply to his uncle's letter.

Monsignore is one of those courteous personages who never grudge the trouble of writing a letter; many a great man, as




he well knows, owes his greatness to the unwearied practice of such courtesy. In respect of his dealings with Parson John Jacob, or rather in respect of that parson's dealings with him, courteous replies have always been his rule. Every pamphlet has been duly acknowledged, and with his best thanks. Every letter has been duly replied to, and what the lawyers call the formal parts of the reply have never been abbreviated by a single word. Every good wish has been reciprocated. Every piece of advice has been pronounced most valuable. Every ob-  
jurgation has been received with humility, and with the assurance that the recipient would not fail to lay it to heart. Every opportunity has been embraced for presenting the compliments of the season, offering congratulations on the state of the weather, and expressing cordial wishes for continued health and happiness. There are men with whom the most acrimonious controversy only rises to the exalted dignity of fine art, and Monsignore is one of those men. Had he been a mere squabbler, he might still have been no better than the curate of Ditchwater.

Monsignore, when he comes to deal with his uncle's epistle—precisely in its proper turn—is a little embarrassed by the fact that he has not heard anything as yet of the proposal with reference to the management of the building operations to which the writer alludes. He remembers having laid the foundation-stone of the edifice, and remembers that the pretty Countess Titania was there. He knows to a tittle all about old Mr. Marra-bone's bequest. He has been fully informed from time to time, officially as well as otherwise, of all the proceedings in connection with its fulfilment. Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts and Dodd are his private solicitors, and Mr. Dodd is his intimate friend. But he has not seen Mr. Dodd quite lately, and Mr. Dodd has not mentioned this matter in any of his letters, professional or private. This, however, after all, need not interfere with his writing in reply to his uncle's letter.

‘MY DEAR UNCLE,

‘I have the pleasure to acknowledge your kind communication. It is



always a pleasure to me to hear from you. Early associations are blessed reminders, even when they are not supported by that continual intercourse which it has been my valued privilege to maintain with so esteemed a relative—my second father—all my life.'

('Paul,' says the Reverend John Jacob, as he peruses this amiable commencement, 'is a good fellow at heart; he would have been a bishop by this time, to a certainty!')

'I cannot but feel interested in the little difference which has arisen to disturb the serenity of Ditchwater—the home of my youth.'

('Don't call it a little difference, Paul,' exclaims the parson; 'if you had to do with crass ignorance throwing up its nose—However, let us get on.')

'It takes but a little word to overthrow peace.'

('So it does; my peace of mind, after being providentially preserved for sixty years—calm as a mill-pond—to be upset at my time of life by a man whose head is so hollow that—However, let us get on.')

'It may take all the king's horses, my

dear uncle, and all the king's men, to restore it.'

('I'll never forgive him, never! Ruined the comfort of the parish; I can't possibly forgive him.')

'I sympathise with you, therefore, very greatly, and with your parishioners.'

('I knew you would, Paul, I knew you would. I haven't given you an opportunity for many years, but I knew you would. Blood's thicker than water. I'm really very much obliged to you, Paul; I won't forget it.')

'Taking, as I do, a never-wearying interest in all that concerns the parish in which I spent so many happy days——'

('God bless you, Paul! I remember them well. I wish you had remained, and not been led away, my dear boy, by— However, let us get on.')

'I cannot but express my unfeigned regret to hear that it is threatened with such disasters.' (Some quarrel, thought the writer, about game.)

('A very good, nice, quiet way of putting it, Paul.')

‘Your resistance——’ (‘This,’ thought the writer further as he wrote, ‘is in fact the chief element in the transaction ; I am to be his ally against the new enemy ; I agree to the terms, so far, cheerfully.’)

(‘This is the point,’ says the parson, as he reads—‘this is the point.’)

‘A determined resistance—as a duty which you owe to your office—I cannot but consider to be in every respect proper ; and if I could be present with you I could not but support you therein.’

(‘Hurrah, Paul ! I knew you would !’)

‘Be urgent, therefore, my dear uncle, in maintaining your ground.’ (‘I hope indeed he may,’ thought Monsignore, ‘and the controversy will see him out.’) ‘And always calculate upon my warmest sympathy.’

(‘I will, Paul ; I’m getting old, but I’ll stick to my colours now to the last !’)

‘I have not yet heard, unfortunately, of the proposal respecting the ecclesiastical undertaking you mention.’ (‘This,’ thought the writer, ‘is the second point in the transaction. My uncle calls the edifice by one name, I by another—that is by-play ; but I

am to take charge of it; I think I can agree to this also.')

('He doesn't call it a church, I see,' says the reader; 'I was afraid he would. Paul respects my prejudices.')

'I will not fail to make inquiry; and you and Julian may rest assured of my most cordial co-operation. I often think of the time when we were restoring our church at Ditchwater; and I am sure I understand your views.'

('Ah, Paul! so you do, I'm sure. He still calls it "Our church." So it is, Paul, my dear boy.')

'Those were indeed happy days.'

('They were indeed; we were all happy together then.')

'But alas! they are gone.'

('So they are.')

'As for the quotation you mention, I am sorry I cannot recognise the author, and scarcely know where to look for it; but if I remember, be sure that I will inform you.'

('It's of no consequence, Paul; I only thought you might know it. It may possibly be original—such as it is.')

‘Expect therefore, my dear uncle, to hear from me again if I may be permitted such a pleasure ; and meanwhile let me subscribe myself

‘Your most affectionate nephew.’

It need only be said further that, upon Monsignore's return, half an hour's confidential chat with Mr. Dodd enables him to decide upon taking off the hands of Julian and the Sergeant all the trouble attending the execution of their trust. To every one concerned this seems a happy way out of a difficulty. Messrs. Alabasters, Banisters, Crumpetts and Dodd prepare the necessary documents ; Julian and the Sergeant gladly execute them ; Monsignore meets them for the purpose, and is most cordial and indeed affectionate. Monsignore instructs Mr. Dodd in their presence to take care to consult them upon every point in which they might be supposed to take an interest—if only for the sake of the poor people whose trustees they all alike must regard themselves to be ; Monsignore writes a second letter to the Rector of Ditchwater ; the Rector for a second time

is vastly pleased with his nephew's sympathy ; and Sir Constantine Gay, who, as a man of the world, consults his own solicitor in private upon every step that is taken, has the satisfaction of thinking that everything is put upon a proper footing. The only dissentient from the otherwise universal satisfaction turns out eventually to be Master Georgius the Architect. Monsignore cannot be persuaded to admire either the round tower or the ninth century nave ; before he knows where he is, Monsignore has on the contrary persuaded him to the preparation of a comparatively sober and undemonstrative design, which it is decreed shall not be departed from. 'Utility and Grace,' says Monsignore, 'characteristic and refined, must be our motto ;' and Master Georgius, although a little chop-fallen, has it to tell that he is going in now for Utility and Grace, you know, in everything, characteristic and refined—the best things going. One thing consoles him ; Monsignore speaks of their undertaking, not as a church, but as an Abbey.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## AGAIN TO MADONNA.

ALTHOUGH winter has not yet quite come, judging by accepted reckonings of the seasons, it is a very wintry day indeed, early in November, when Julian Saint-Paul determines that, cost what it may cost, he must see Madonna again. He has been reading science hard. He has returned to his work at Sweetbriar Gardens. Poor pretty Biddy Cassidy has died and been buried; others have died and been buried; they are always dying and being buried at Sweetbriar Gardens. He has been a good deal relieved by Monsignore his cousin having consented to take in hand Master Georgius the Architect, Mr. Dodd the attorney, and all other belongings to old Mr. Marrabone's business. He has been a good deal occupied also in completing


the arrangements for the transfer. Sir Constantine has just left town, and has left him more alone.]

Premature snow fills the air as he arrives at the Professor's door in the Park. The Professor is out. The natty waiting-maid is as delighted as ever to see the visitor's face, and volunteers the statement that Miss Madonna is at home. She also asks him if he will please to take a chair for a moment in the dining-room, where there is a fire, which, she further goes so far as to suggest, it is welcome to see on such a day.

In a very few moments—for why should she tarry?—Madonna enters the dining-room, looking as blithe as she can. She takes him a little by surprise, no doubt. He is standing looking out from the window upon the wintry landscape and the snow still filling the air. He does not hear her enter. She comes frankly to his side.

'Dear Julian,' she says, frankly, 'I am very glad to see you. I hope you are better.'

She does not wonder that he starts, for he seems to be deeply engaged in thought.




But the reflection of a single instant compels her to say, 'Pardon me, dear Julian, for being so thoughtless; I forgot that you have been so ill.'

'Never thoughtless, dearest Madonna,' he replies; 'ever considerate and kind; but this prospect had bewildered me a little; how melancholy it is!'

'It is so premature,' says Madonna; 'to-morrow may be almost a summer day.'

'Let us sit down and talk,' he says.

They sit down by the fire and chat; not very cheerfully, not earnestly. He is dispirited; she disquieted. He sighs at intervals; so would she, but that she checks the sigh. He tells her of Sweetbriar Gardens; of his having resumed his work, but not yet so continuously as he could wish; of the Sergeant's never-failing energy; of the new church; of his cousin having kindly undertaken the administration of it; of Constantine's immeasurable kindness and friendship; of his having at last set off to take a mutilated holiday. He tells her of the people that are dying at Sweetbriar Gardens; of poor pretty Biddy Cassidy; of the Countess



Titania (yes, he will be brave and say it!) having visited the death-bedside, kissed the wan and hollow cheek, left her cloak upon the thinly covered bed, her purse in the poor mother's hands, and fled affrighted away!

The snow is dashed against the windows; the north wind sweeps along in gusts; the trees shiver before it, and cower together as if they fain would flee; the snow covers half the window panes, clinging to the glass to escape the squall. Wayfarers pass by in bent attitudes, hats pulled over their eyes, collars set up around their ears, red noses shrinking in the cold, breasts or backs covered with the snow, an umbrella now and then like to be blown away for ever into the unseen.

Julian pauses in his story; rises and walks toward the window.

'Yes,' he cries, 'let the cold snow fly before the cruel blast! Let frost and hunger kill and yet kill! Let devastation reign; darkness; despair! What is this wretched world, but always thus?'

'Dearest Julian, you are ill.'

'No; I am recovering myself at last. I

have been too long living the life of a slug-gard ; I must be up and doing something ! We cannot afford to dally with such a world in this way ; we must fight ; the terrible enemy surrounds us ; we shall be swept away ! God is not served unless we struggle ; He will lead us on if we will fight, but He will utterly forsake us if we stand idly by. We are His only soldiers ; He provides no others here ; nor does He Himself fight ! This miserable world is filled—filled by Him, and for our sake—with infinite, indiscriminate, amazing misery, and vice, and agony ; yes, for our sake, that we should fight, and still fight, and never weary of the contest ; if we leave all this no better, we leave it worse ! Shall I turn my back, then, upon the enemy—shall I play the traitor ?

‘ Dearest Julian, be not so discomposed ; the soft snow wraps the earth in the winter, and shields it from the cold ; to-morrow may be a summer-day, and you will be glad again.’

‘ Do you think, Madonna, you could go to the death-bedside of the poor abandoned girl, and nurse her tenderly, and kiss her, and

cover her with your own garment, and comfort her with all you possess ?’

Madonna turns deadly pale. It is *this*, after all, that torments him ! It is yon beautiful reptile-woman who sat by him at the table of Mount Medusa ; who led the treacherous conversation at the cottage ; who stood by and laughed off the insolence of the inebriate. All is explained at last ! Alas, alas, alas !

Shall she affect indifference, then, and lead him back to gentler conversation so ? Shall she smile upon him, caress him, entreat him, force him with sheer kindness to forget the tempter ? Shall she weep, and—not reproach him—but remind him by her silence of his duty ?

She feels—oh, so giddy and faint ! But she must not yield to weakness. ‘I could do all this,’ she says, ‘for——’

For what ? For love, no doubt ; but this will not be an answer such as she should give. For duty, no doubt : then, why not have done it already ? For his sake ; and why for his sake ?—Why has the Countess Titania done it ?

She has lost the one precious moment.

‘Madonna,’ he says, with infinite tenderness, ‘I am cruel; I ought not to have said what I did. Let me hasten away; let me come when I am more composed. The wintry storm disconcerts us both; I am harsh to-day; you are ever kind.’

‘Dearest Julian,’ she replies, ‘let me say a word.’

‘Not to-day, my Madonna, not to-day. Let me go forth into the snow; I love it—it is so cold; the rough wind will comfort me—nerve me for my work. My people are shivering, hungry, sick, forlorn; I must hasten to help them, or they will die!’

‘Oh! what shall I do?’ says Madonna, weeping; ‘tell me what I can do to help you, Julian, Julian?’

‘Nothing at all. I am well; I am strong. I shall walk all the way. I must hasten to my work; I have been too long absent. Remember me to your uncle. Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!’

## CHAPTER XLV.


## AGAIN TOGETHER !

SOME would say he has left her cruelly ; but it is not so. He has hurried away—she had not the courage to restrain him ; agitated—what could she say to soothe him ? distraught—how could she ask him to explain ? bewildered—how offer explanation ?

She runs upstairs to her room ; seeks a wretched relief in bitter tears ; bemoans her misery—and his.

Not a word of resentment ; not a thought of reproach : only sorrow. Alas ! not a thought of hope ; not a ray of light : darkness only, and unutterable fear.

Yes, this clears up everything at last. She who went to see the dying girl—why did she go ? Nursed her, he said, and kissed her ; why ? Covered her from the cold, and



provided her with money ; for what purpose all this ?

Why should not she also go to some dying girl ; nurse her ; kiss her ; cover her with her own clothing ; bestow her purse upon her ?—It would be easy enough to do all this. But what would it avail ? The high spirit of the enthusiast would but turn away in anger and shame, as from a fraud. And even if not a fraud, what a sorry imitation !

Why not expose the artifice of this treacherous woman ? Nay ; let others, if they will, resort to such attack, or such defence ; she cannot do such a thing, she cannot indeed.

Why should she not write to him ? False shame need not stand in the way, surely, for they are old friends. He will not take it ill. Sensitive he is, but he will not take it ill. She writes:

‘ DEAR JULIAN,— I am afraid you are very poorly. Perhaps it is because Constantine has been obliged to go away. Let my uncle see you. Let us try whether we can do anything for you. Say by bearer whether my uncle may call when he comes in. I am very

miserable. I do not like to say so, but indeed I am.'

The crossing-sweeper at the corner is looked up by the natty waiting-maid, with her shawl thrown over her head under Madonna's umbrella. He had taken shelter in an accustomed archway; he is fortified with wine; he is rewarded with a handsome gift; and off he goes to Julian's lodging with the letter. He meets him at the door—just starting for Sweetbriar Gardens. Reading the letter, the young man returns to his room and writes an answer.

'DEAREST MADONNA,—Try to think well of me. Do not let your uncle call; it would embarrass me. Heaven only knows what I suffer. Constantine does not know half. Bear with me. When I am well enough, believe me, it is to you I will come. Meanwhile let the mystery have its way—God grant that it may wear itself out! Say nothing more, dearest Madonna, nothing more; leave me to fight alone!'

'Again together!' Thus he muses as he walks to his field of work. 'Always together

once more! The good angel and the——  
Oh, surely not the bad! Kissing the wan  
hollow cheek, comforting the outcast; surely  
not a demon this! How fair—both how  
very fair! Virtue and witchery; guileless  
innocence, and—dare I say guilt? No, I  
dare not. Spreading her rich cloak upon the  
meagre bed; thrusting her purse into the  
poor shrivelled hand; how dare I say guilt?  
O woman, inexplicable riddle! Why should  
you torment *me* thus? A busy student, no  
idle lounge; a votary of hard science, no  
sentimental poetaster; an eccentric enthu-  
siast, no flighty boy; why should *I*—how  
possibly *can I*—be thus fit sport for woman?  
I that could pass a thousand beauties by  
without a smile—how is this? I that have  
been overwhelmed beyond all rational aim in  
fervid agonising toil—how is this? Fair  
creature! You have put a poisoned cup to  
my lips—but I cannot believe it! Serpent  
—beautiful serpent! You have stung me  
as a viper stings a clown—but I cannot  
believe it! O God, God, God! why hast  
Thou forsaken me?

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### DEATH AGAIN IN THE GARDENS.

BUT he has reached Sweetbriar Gardens. Poor old Mrs. Valentine is being called away at last. Her husband is being comforted by the Sergeant.

‘Cheer up, comrade,’ says the Sergeant ; ‘it must come to all on us some time, the best and the worst. The mistress will be better attended to where she’s going than you and me and even the doctor can do it. So let us cheer up a bit, don’t you see ?’

‘So many years together,’ mumbles the old man, ‘so many years together. Haven’t we, Nancy dear ? They might ’a let us die together. Don’t you think so, doctor ? We are Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Valentine. Hatter to His Most Gracious Majesty I was. And my old lady was young and handsome

then ; wasn't you, Nancy dear ? Of course you was, my dear. And whatever am I to do without her, Sergeant ? We've been so long together.'

'The mistress,' replies the Sergeant, 'knows that we won't let you want for looking after, Mr. Valentine. So she wants you to cheer up, don't you see ?'

Such a many years ago ! I was on the vestry, and a guardian of the poor, I was ; and might 'a been churchwarden if I'd liked, but was not ambitious. But I've seen since then—oh what a deal o' misery ! And now they'll put me in the workhus, I know they will, now that Nancy's taken. I know they will.'

'Let's hope not, Mr. Valentine,' says the Sergeant ; 'let's hope for better things.'

'I know they will : they only let me be here to wait on Nancy ; I know they will.'

The doctor is silent, but not inactive. He moistens the parched lips of the poor old woman ; cools her brow ; at intervals introduces a little stimulating nourishment between her fixed and toothless gums ; watches her eye, her pulse.

Still speechless, she can only look into his face with loving thankfulness. He is amply rewarded.

He has left the bedside from time to time to visit others in scarcely less extremity. Hours have passed.

At last the dying woman, with a desperate effort, regains for a moment her speech.

‘Husband!’ she says in a weak but tender voice.

The old man leaps to his feet as if struck by some electric touch.

‘I am glad to go,’ says the poor woman ; ‘don’t fret for me. Follow me as quick as you can.’

She would say more ; she would doubtless thank her kindly visitors ; but it is not to be. The token of death is in her throat.

She is dead !

What is to be done with the poor man ?

Alas ! cases like his, in a hundred forms, are but too familiar here. The doctor gives his directions and takes his leave. The women of the house—such women of such a house ! take charge of the body. The old soldier takes charge of the widower, and as

kindly as if he were a widowed gentleman.

‘You’ll come with me, Mr. Valentine, and put up in my room ; which I’ve got hard by, you know ; and so I can stay with you for the night and see to you.’

And during the night, the old man being not inclined for sleep, the Sergeant reads to him old words of consolation again and again and tells him tales of his experience ; and, by dint of keeping up the fire and brewing tea now and then, contrives to get on till morning.

‘I haven’t a relation in the world,’ says the old man.

‘No more haven’t I,’ replies the Sergeant.

‘And nobody cares for me——’

‘There I think you’re wrong, Mr. Valentine, quite wrong.’

‘Now that my poor Nancy’s taken.’

‘Well, cheer up, Mr. Valentine ; let me read a bit more.’

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## RELENTING.

HIS Excellency the Viscount Malign, Ambassador Extraordinary, and Monsignore Saint-Paul, Chaplain of the Palace, are sitting over their wine at Mount Medusa, after dinner. Keops has waited upon them alone, and he is gone. Lais lies asleep on a rug. It is the depth of winter.

Monsignore has been telling his host of the progress of the Abbey of All Saints and Angels. His Excellency has been vastly amused at his account of the eccentricities of Master Georgius the Architect.

‘A most extraordinary young man,’ says his Excellency; ‘I remember his interpretation of my wonderful dish.’

‘He is more amenable to reason now,’ replies Monsignore; ‘he yields to discipline.’

I have hopes—for his own sake, not for the profit of it—that he may even come over to the ancient faith. It is the natural goal of his form of enthusiasm for the past. We represent the past. We constitute the past.'

'Of yesterday, perhaps, my dear Monsignore; not of the day before.'

'Of yesterday, no doubt; but the day before was chaos.'

'Scarcely; but how is my old friend the soldier?'

'Always the same delightfully foolish old fellow; he is of the blessed class, Viscount, that Fate itself does not thwart. Even our architect did not succeed in disturbing his peace. Dodd tells me tales of infinite mirth about Master Oldhousen's never-ending novelties and the soldier's never-failing satisfaction. But if anything could sooner or later accomplish the provocation of even a fool, it would be the wondrous vagaries of our architect. The building, however, progresses apace. The roof is fixed on the choir; and I have ordered that the rest of the edifice shall be carried on at leisure, but

all together, and all in harmony of art. The architect was dissatisfied for a time, no doubt; but it is in train now.'

'And what purpose, my dear Monsignore, is your abbey to serve in such a place?'

'The very ignorant,' says the Chaplain of the Palace, 'may be redeemed from the depth of their moral destitution by either of two very opposite religious processes. They may be raised up by the influence of a sense of liberty, through their own vulgar but effective agency; they may be coerced by a sense of fear, through the supremacy of a dignified sacerdotalism. We work by the latter course; and we partially succeed. We reach the very lowest; and we alone can reach them, even in such a place as that.'

'Our pretty Countess Titania, Monsignore, was terribly shocked at the condition of things there.'

'She has recovered now, your Excellency. The charming lady has been abroad for a little time, and has regained both her composure and her complexion.'

'And what of your young physician? Has

his combative parent favoured you with further polemics?’

‘No; he surrendered a little while ago. He went to war with another power, and had to seek alliances.’

‘Ha!’

‘He quarrelled with the patrician of his parish on the subject of game—not an uncommon subject of quarrel; and therefore, having no strength to fight a second enemy—even one so weak as I—he sought my aid instead. And I gave it. I have not seen him, but we are very good friends. He is still engaged with the Earl, and is likely to continue so. The Earl does not let him have all the play as I did.’

‘And what of his son?’

‘The Countess is fair, and Julian is much enamoured.’

‘She told me long ago he was mad.’

‘Not mad; almost worse.’

‘What fools are men, Monsignore!’

‘They are, your Excellency, no doubt.’

‘And the pretty niece of the philosopher?’

‘Pines away.’

‘And our Count Oberon—charming young man?’

‘A failure this time, your Excellency, quite.’

‘I am glad of it!’ says Viscount Malign, quickly.

‘So am I,’ says Monsignore Saint-Paul.

They have been regarding each other all this while in the judicious manner long ago described, taking pains to look not too directly at each other. Suddenly their eyes meet.

‘I say I am pleased,’ repeats the Viscount Malign, ‘to hear that the sweet niece of the philosopher holds her ground, Monsignore Saint-Paul. Let us have a little pity, now and then, if only as a relief.’

‘And I say in sincerity,’ replies Monsignore, ‘I say in sincerity, my dear Viscount—’

‘Quiet, Lais!’ says the Viscount; ‘you compel me to apologise to the right reverend prelate. What disturbs your fine feminine instincts now, fair Lais?’

It may be nothing more than the unctuous tone of speech assumed by the priest, so

different from the carelessness of mere gossip hitherto characterising the conversation. It may be nothing more than a change in his attitude. It may possibly be the effect of the change in her master's own demeanour. But the wild animal has risen from the floor, and her eyes flash green as she listens intently—as if for some sound of alarm without the room, or under it, or over it, no matter where. Perhaps it may be some such sound as that of pretty laughter amongst the ladies in the Sanctuary beyond that door—the ladies notably in the corroded silver daintily picked out in gold.

‘Why so distressed, sweet Lais, if I say I am pleased that tender innocence for once escapes the lure?’

Lais licks his hand.

‘One more soul,’ says Monsignore, taking snuff, ‘or one less, is little in the game we play, your Excellency; but not only do I feel glad that this young spirit may escape the snare of ruin; I would, if I could—believe me, Viscount Malign, I would if it were possible—save also the poor youth himself.’

Lais snarls—it may be the manner only of the priest, or a gesture of his hand—and recedes from him as if in some dire distrust.

For once the Ambassador feels his intelligence at fault. This actually does not look like hypocrisy!

‘My personal quarrel with him is at an end,’ continues Monsignore; ‘and I remember that we are of one blood.’

‘The war is exchanged for alliance?’

‘It is very nearly so.’

‘The heat of battle at least is over?’

‘No doubt there is something in that.’

‘You are not an impulsive man, Monsignore.’

‘I am not; and I do not fight, therefore, without impulse from without. Our war is at an end. My good uncle is occupied for the short remainder of his life with conflict nearer home. The Earl will never yield an inch, and the rector will never yield another. I have won my own victory by accident—as victories are most commonly won—but I have won it, and it is a good rule to be therewith content.’

‘Your philosophy is good, Monsignore;

but what of the sound Christian principle of just resentment? You have not forgotten the wrong, surely?

‘I forget nothing.’

‘And the Church never forgives.’

‘Never.’

‘And the pastime of the angels?’

‘Oh yes, I am aware of all you would say.’

‘Perhaps you feel indolent, my dear Monsignore; perhaps the inevitable desire for rest——?’

‘No; I am more busy than ever.’

‘Perhaps one enemy the less——?’

‘No doubt.’

‘One enterprise the less——?’

‘No doubt.’

‘Possibly a little pity——? Do not deny it.’

‘I do not deny it.’

‘Even the Church may have pity.’

‘No; but the Churchman.’

‘The Church forgives not, but the Churchman may?’

‘In a manner so.’

‘The Church relaxes not, but the Churchman may?’

‘No doubt.’

‘Expediency, my dear Monsignore——?’

‘Has doubtless its weight.’

‘The Church hates, but the Churchman may——?’

‘Oh fie, Viscount Malign! Neither can ever hate. The line of thought is unpleasant; let us be content to say we would avoid a needless scandal. My young cousin has suffered; suffers; may suffer too much.’

‘Not too much for the angels?’

‘Nor for—— But let us say, my dear Viscount, the young man may suffer too much for my interest; that argument will suffice for the occasion, if argument there must be.’

‘So be it, Monsignore. Then shall we call the bloodhound off?’

‘I am shocked, my dear Viscount Malign. To call the fair Titania a bloodhound!’

‘It would be coarse, Monsignore, no doubt. Shall we say a sweet, beautiful snake?’

‘Have pity, my dear Viscount, upon womanhood ; say a pretty butterfly.’

‘Luring the witless pursuer into the treacherous pit. My poor Titania ! thy wings are of silk and gold ; why call thee vile names, indeed, my pretty one, because they are of silk and gold ? But how shall it be, Mon-signore Saint-Paul ? Say the word : what shall we do with the enchantress ?’

‘We leave the matter alone, my dear Viscount, and the mischief comes to an end in a little time. Such is the beneficent law of nature ; the poisonous influence evaporates, and he is none the worse.’

‘Indeed ?’

‘So I suppose.’

‘Agreed ; agreed.’

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## REPENTING.

THE night is dark as Monsignore rides homeward. Even although the snow covers all the landscape, he is scarcely able to see his way. But his good horse can do this better for himself; and so he pushes on cheerfully enough.

‘Why should I torment the boy?’ muses the rider. ‘I owe him nothing but love. It was a mistake to enter upon such an enterprise of vindictiveness. We become blinded by mere spleen, in spite of all our caution. Why torture the girl? I wish we had not done this.’

‘O black vault! worms and worthless though we may be, why leave us in all this incertitude — this chaos of sentiment — this blundering fog of interest and duty? The

wisdom of to-day the utter folly of to-morrow ! Unthinking love becoming unthinking hatred, only that thoughtless hatred may become thoughtless love ! Meaningless pleasure, only that there may be purposeless pain ! Universal sorrow a mere basis upon which to build the semblance of occasional joy !

‘ But I am drawing nearer to my own goal. My life has been a struggle; is now a success; is to be a triumph. Small as the world may be, it is all we have. Pitiful as is the praise of mankind, and only despicable when not pitiful—provoking the very anger of contempt for its cunning when it ceases to induce compassion for its imbecility—this praise, if not all we have to earn, is the sole index of the attainment of our desire. Ambition may be as idle as the wind, but what else has the world to offer ? If it is, as it is, the supreme good of our nature, why rail at it ?

‘ They speak — in sermons and the like, which serve their purpose in their way—of peace. I know not, there may be some such thing. I have never seen it. Indolence I know, and spiritless repose, but not peace ;

vegetation, self-imprisonment, but not peace ; drunkenness there may be of many kinds, and the listlessness of sleep, but never peace : the peace of a strong and active intellect has no existence in this little world of ours at all—none at all.

‘The terrible Viscount and I have done an injury to my poor young cousin and his pretty betrothed. It cannot be undone. I must recompense them in some way when—when I come to my kingdom. I am sorry.’

Monsignore is not alone in his regret. The Ambassador Extraordinary has passed into his private chamber. Lais follows him as he walks up and down the floor. He has much work to do to-night ; there are many papers on his tables to be read, many letters to be written before daybreak. The world—called the great world by some—is very busy at midwinter, and the embassy of his Excellency the Viscount Malign has much to do at that season. But the Ambassador cannot help pacing up and down the floor of the Sanctuary, Lais at his heels. All is absolute silence, without as within.

‘The priest, fair Lais,’ he says, ‘deceives us at last. He is incomprehensible at last. What is this story of a quarrel about partridges and pheasants? This is not the motive power for the actions of such a man. Does he long for ease? I see no sign of that. Has he turned compassionate? Not whilst the red hat is in his view, and the mitre and the tiara not wholly un contemplated. I shall despair at last of human cruelty if Monsignore Saint-Paul have turned to tenderness because of the sorrows of a love-lorn boy.

‘But I grieve for the maiden. Yes, Lais, I sorrow for the woman-child. Such have no sin to merit such temptation, no strength to meet it in fierce fight! I am sorry for the maiden.

‘Titania, I am always sorry for thee. Why, because thy pretty wings are made for thee of satin and gold, shouldst thou be called vile names? Thou hast a heart, my poor Titania, if they would but try to find it—if they would but forbear for a moment the everlasting watch that compels fine fashionable ladyhood to stifle tears. But thou shalt

find peace some day, Titania ; when the world has turned round and thou canst find the shade, thou shalt find peace.

‘ Now to my work.’ He examines for a moment the illuminated ball that tells how all the world is lying, in the sunshine or in the shade. The fair ladies who support it shrink as he approaches, but he seats himself almost immediately at a table, and no doubt they are reassured. Lais, in a feline manner, stands staring at the glowing globe they carry, but they only smile — smile at the wild beast wondering at the mystery of the world.

And thus, amidst his shadowy lookers-on, all eyes bent on him in the silence, he pursues the solemn work of his strange embassy all through the night.

END OF VOL. II.







